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Inta Mieriņa *Editors*

# The Emigrant Communities of Latvia

National Identity, Transnational  
Belonging, and Diaspora Politics

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Editors

# The Emigrant Communities of Latvia

National Identity, Transnational Belonging,  
and Diaspora Politics

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction



**Rita Kaša and Inta Mierīņa**

This volume contributes to research on migration from Latvia, a country in Central Eastern Europe (CEE), following the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1991. The experience of independent Latvia with borders opening up to the world and more specifically to the West has turned out to be both a rewarding and wounding experience for communities in the country. On the rewarding side, individuals have gained liberty – an ability to travel the world freely, to see and live in the countries which were beyond the closed doors of the Soviet Union just some decades ago. This freedom, however, has also brought the sense of cost to the society – people are going abroad as if dissolving into other worlds, away from their small homeland. The context of decreasing birth rates and ageing in the country seems to amplify a feeling of loss which is supported by hard evidence. Research shows a worrying 17% decline in Latvia's population between 2000 and 2013. One third of this is due to declining birth rates and two-thirds is caused by emigration (Hazans 2016). This situation has turned out to be hurtful experience for communities in Latvia causing a heightened sense of grief especially during the Great Recession which shook the country at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century. By 2013 the feeling of crises even larger than the economic downturn came to a head in Latvian society, pushing the government for the first time in the history of independent Latvia to recognise the migration of the country's nationals and to acknowledge diaspora politics as an important item on the national policy agenda.

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This has raised a number of important questions for research. What has become of the contemporary post-1991 Latvian migrant communities? Who are they? Where are they? How are they? What do they do? How do they live? And how is Latvia's government reaching them through its diaspora policy measures? Will they ever come back? And if they do, will they stay? The current volume presents answers to these questions.

The focus of this volume is driven not only by specific interest in contemporary migrant realities in a very specific historically national context, but also by the potential to address the gap in research on migrants originating from a small European nation. Thus, while the dominant share of migration studies in Europe focus on immigrants from non-European countries (CEED 2014), this volume provides evidence on migrants from a CEE country, particularly their socio-cultural uprooting, processes of integration, and – in the case of return migration – re-integration.

This volume extends the issues covered in research on East to West European migration, especially in the case of the Baltic countries. The literature hitherto has predominantly tackled issues of labour market (Black et al. 2010; Kahanec and Zimmermann 2009). In addition to aspects of employment, this volume addresses social and political trust among emigrants, networks and social inclusion, identity and their sense of belonging, language use and acquisition, participation and distance nationalism, cultural and media consumption, policies aimed at return migration, and employment and education abroad. All these issues in the case of CEE migrant communities have been under-researched although increasingly they are deemed relevant for scholarly investigation (Bijl and Verweij 2012; Bilgili et al. 2015; Ersanilli and Koopmans 2011; Huddleston et al. 2013).

This volume finds its place among studies examining emigration from the perspective of migrant sending countries and contributes to closing the gap in research on migration from Baltics since much of the existing research on migration from CEE focuses on such relatively large communities as Polish and Romanian migrants (e.g., Faist 2003; Galent et al. 2009; Gorny and Rusipi 2004; Kuvik et al. 2013; Simon et al. 2008; Uccellini 2013; Ziemer and Roberts 2012). At the same time, while Latvia is one of the smallest states in Europe it is home to one of the most mobile populations of CEE citizens and according to some estimates, has the highest expected migration potential among European Union (EU) member states (Hazans 2016). A particular feature in the case of Latvian migration is the large share of mostly Russian-speaking ethnic minority people among Latvian migrants, and the increasing share of children and young people leaving the country.

Empirical evidence in the volume broadens and deepens the knowledge about the reasons for and patterns of Latvian migration during the past 25 years. Most importantly, it provides a fascinating insight into the social and psychological aspects linked to migration in a comparative context. The data in the volume is rich in providing perspectives at the individual level of contemporary Latvian migrants globally addressing issues such as emigrants' economic, social and cultural embeddedness in the host country, ties with the home country and culture, interaction with public

authorities both in the host and home country, political views, and perspectives on the permanent settlement in migration or return. This research presents the perspectives of diverse groups of migrants including skilled and unskilled professionals, housewives, students, and entrepreneurs. Although the volume builds on data about Latvian emigrants, many of the issues discussed here are faced by any emigrant community – such as the assimilation of children, relationships between emigrants representing different emigration waves, the complex identities and attachments of minority emigrants, and the role of culture and media in identity formation and presentation.

While focused on one sending country, the volume takes on analysis of immigrants' socio-cultural integration at their destinations in a wide comparative perspective. It addresses socio-cultural integration of Latvian migrants in multiple host countries in Europe and elsewhere, diversifying the existing body of literature dominated by case studies of CEE migrant communities in several large receiving countries and especially in Great Britain (e.g., Kuvik et al. 2013; Ziemer and Roberts 2012).

Such contribution of this volume rests on a large dataset generated in the scope of the interdisciplinary research project *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia: National identity, transnational relations and diaspora politics* Nr. 013/0055/IDP/1.1.1.2.0/13/APIA/VIAA/040, financed by the European Social Fund. The project was carried out under the auspices of the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, University of Latvia in cooperation with the Faculty of Economics and Management during 2014 and the first half of 2015. This research project brought together a team of 16 researchers representing the disciplines of sociology, economics, media studies, comparative education and political science engaged in a coordinated task to develop a multi-faceted view on contemporary migration from a single sending country – Latvia. In the scope of this work, the research team undertook data collection engaging Latvian emigrant communities in many nations in Europe and elsewhere. Under the umbrella of the overall research focus, each researcher in the project had their own set of research questions, inquiring deeply into specific aspects of contemporary migration realities.

Given the versatility of the researchers' academic backgrounds and research interests, the research process leading to the results presented in this volume involved a significant effort to develop a joint interdisciplinary methodology for the project. Thus, the methodological approach in data collection was jointly designed, while each researcher in the team had a distinct angle when examining contemporary migration from Latvia, described further in this chapter.

An integrated approach to surveying emigrants, which formed the core of the research project, distinguishes this volume from other studies not only on migration from Latvia, but other Eastern European countries as well. Evidence presented in the chapters of this volume comes from a large quantitative and qualitative data set. This quantitative data set, which we refer to as '*The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey,' includes 14,068 respondents who have emigrated from Latvia and represent 118 emigration destination countries. The qualitative data set extends

quantitative research data providing in-depth descriptions of migration realities. The qualitative data consists of almost 200 in-depth interviews with emigrants in Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and other countries, return migrants in Latvia and national migration policy experts. Some authors in this volume used additional qualitative data generation techniques when examining their specific research topic, described in their respective chapters. A detailed discussion of the development and application of the integrated research design for studying contemporary emigrant communities of Latvia is presented in Chap. 2 by Inta Mieriņa in this volume.

One important part of developing a common research methodology for a group of researchers representing different academic disciplines and fields of study was reaching an agreement on the definition of the central terms of the study. The focus of this research on contemporary migrants from Latvia drew on the dichotomous notion of pre-1991 and post-1991 migration from Latvia, characterised by very different historical circumstances. Migration from Latvia in the twentieth century prior to 1991 was predominantly driven by events associated with World Wars I and II, described in Chap. 3 of this volume by Mihails Hazans. Forced emigration from Latvia was a common reason for the forming of the Latvian diaspora prior to 1991. The collapse of the Soviet Union, full restoration of Latvia's independence in 1991, and its subsequent integration with Western countries and the European Union opened new migration opportunities, also discussed by Hazans. Post-1991 emigration was not forced by acts of war and foreign occupation regimes, but influenced by changing economic, social and political conditions instead. The dichotomy of the pre and post-1991 circumstances formed a logical borderline in this research to define contemporary migration as 'cross-border movement after 1991'.

At the same time, drawing strict borders and frames when defining a social phenomenon can be rather arbitrary. Although the approach in this research defines a 'contemporary migrant' as someone who moved out of the country after 1991, there are cases when the logic of applying the year of Latvia's *de jure* independence as the strict and only measure can be challenged. Migration conditions for some years before and after 1991 were in many ways more comparable than those in 1992 and 2000. Therefore, even though guided by the notion of the *old* and *new* diaspora with 1991 as the cut-off line, when collecting data we maintained the possibility for our research participants to self-identify as the members of the *new* diaspora, i.e., a contemporary migrant. Thus, although data in the chapters of this volume primarily speaks about post-1991 migration, there are cases of earlier departures from Latvia as well. In *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey, 6.4% of all respondents said they had emigrated prior to 1991. The decisions of authors to include or exclude this group of participants in the analysis was guided by the focus of each chapter.

Specific research questions addressed in separate chapters of the volume set their own requirements for the characteristics of participants such as the year of migration. For example, in Chap. 11 on the communication of the identity of Latvian migrants on social networking sites, Ianis Bucholtz and Laura Sūna present per-



spectives of participants who emigrated after the emergence of the widespread use of contemporary social media platforms, i.e., after 2004. Similarly in Chap. 13 by Rita Kaša on the nexus between student loan forgiveness and return migration, the availability of student loans for studies abroad from 2001 set the focus on participants who left to study abroad after this year.

Another term as equally important as ‘contemporary’ in this research was the concept of diaspora. In order to capture the diversity of contemporary Latvian emigrant communities, this study applied an open definition of the term ‘Latvian diaspora’, welcoming any participant who self-identified with Latvia as a geographical place, nation or citizen. Fieldwork was organized in three languages – Latvian, Russian and English – so research collecting quantitative and qualitative data could be tailored depending on the participant’s preference. To enable a diversity of migrant associations with Latvia and yet have one common reference point, the common baseline characteristic for research participants was their or their family’s emigration from Latvia.

One of the aims of this research was to capture the perspectives of the ethnic minority representatives of the contemporary Latvian diaspora. To achieve it, this research sought to recruit Russian-speaking members of Latvian emigrant communities. In determining the belonging of research participants to an ethnic minority or a Russian-speaking group from Latvia during data collection, we relied on the self-identification of participants. We do not apply terms such as ‘ethnic Russian’ in this research unless the participants themselves identify like this. We took a similar approach to the majority group in this research; that is, ethnic Latvians. Participant self-identification with this ethnicity determined their belonging to this group. In order to succeed in recruiting ethnically diverse participants, we had to approach participant recruitment based on some assumptions about their ethnic belonging. However, when collecting data, we asked the participants about their ethnic self-identification and built our further engagement with participants on the basis of this perspective.

Ethnicity as a factor in defining the identity and belonging of migrants emerges as a theme in several chapters of this volume. A systematic focus on identity and belonging as it relates to ethnicity, however, is present in two chapters. In Chap. 6, Mārtiņš Kaprāns discusses the ethno-cultural, political and social contexts for long distance belonging, comparing perspectives of Latvian and Russian-speaking migrants in Great Britain. In Chap. 8, Iveta Jurkane-Hobein and Evija Kļave present a more nuanced view of identity formation among Russian-speaking Latvian migrants in Great Britain and Sweden.

Thus, in this research and the chapters of this volume, there is a common approach concerning a shared, if broad, definition of the terms ‘contemporary migration’, ‘Latvian diaspora’ and ‘ethnic self-identification’ of Latvian migrants. Another common feature is our jointly developed *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey and approach to qualitative interview data collection.

In other respects the chapters in this volume represent diverse contributions. The authors of the chapters in this volume draw on different sources of literature characteristic to their research focus and the field of studies they represent. We view this approach as a positive as it extends the links between the fields of migration studies and knowledge generated in other fields of social sciences. Thus, each chapter in this volume grounds its research focus in the literature suited to that particular research focus. Although this approach does not enable a joint theoretical framework for tackling various angles of contemporary migration, it does offer a multifaceted empirical contribution for understanding the emigrant communities of one sending country in Europe in terms of contemporary migrant identity, belonging and perspectives on return migration.

This volume consists of three parts. The first part of the volume includes chapters which consider the question of contemporary migration, its characteristics and approaches to measuring this phenomenon. Chapter 2 by Mieriņa, as mentioned earlier, describes the research design forming the overarching rules for generating the body of evidence presented in the chapters of this volume. This chapter discusses this methodology in the context of other migration studies and major surveys on migration. Mieriņa argues that innovative elements of the research approach in *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia: National identity, transnational relations and diaspora politics* research project, which is the framework for contributions in this volume, qualify this methodology for application in other contexts and studies of various migrant groups in Europe and beyond.

To set the context for the evidence presented in this volume, the chapter on an integrated approach to survey emigrants worldwide is followed by a description of a brief history of emigration from Latvia in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, together with analysis of its driving forces. In this chapter Hazans provides detailed statistics on the main population flows – migration, refugees and deportation – to and from Latvia in the twentieth century. This review is followed by a more detailed analysis of emigration during the first 15 years of the twenty-first century, describing the four waves of emigration between 2000 and 2016. This analysis draws on the discipline of economics and engages insights from the human capital theory, the new economic theory of migration, the network theory and migration systems theory, as well as emphasising the institutional factors framing migration. The chapter concludes that while economic reasons for emigration remain widespread, non-economic ones are becoming increasingly important. It also concludes that the potential for emigration is higher than the potential for return.

The chapter following that, by Ilze Koroļeva, draws on the dataset of 14,051 respondents in *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey and develops profiles of Latvian emigrants based on their attitudes and self-identification, both with Latvia and their host country. Among Koroļeva's findings is that most respondents feel closer to Latvia than to their host country. However, the people who left Latvia during the Great Recession and its aftermath, as well as those who left for economic reasons, are the most alienated from their home country. These migrants formed the third wave of twenty-first century emigration from Latvia. Koroļeva concludes that

the level of subjective life satisfaction and having a family back at home are important for strengthening the sense of belonging to Latvia and can be a crucial factor in return migration.

Taking into account that most late twentieth and early twenty-first century migration from Latvia has been driven by economic factors, in Chap. 5, Aivars Tabuns looks at the role of formal and informal intermediaries in providing job placement abroad. This chapter addresses such issues as fraud, the mistreatment of jobseekers and discrimination from employers. Using the *Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey data, this chapter describes the vulnerabilities of migrant workers and the unfair treatment and discrimination they face. It also includes recommendations for further studies and policy development.

The second part of the volume *Case Studies on Transnational and National Belonging of Migrants* consists of six chapters, which are in-depth case studies looking at the socio-cultural integration of Latvian migrants in various host countries. This section opens at Chap. 6 with Mārtiņš Kaprāns considering the transnational aspects of identity and the long distance belonging of Latvian migrants in Great Britain. This chapter uses *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey data and semi-structured interviews with Latvian migrants in Great Britain. This chapter discusses the ethno-cultural, political and social contexts of long distance belonging for self-identified Latvian and Russian-speaking emigrants. This research finds differences in ethno-cultural and political contexts of long distance belonging among the ethnic majority and minority emigrants from Latvia. However, there are also points of convergence between the two groups of migrants. This chapter concludes that the social context of long distance belonging enables new forms of allegiance towards Latvia, which are manifested in philanthropic initiatives, participation in various interest groups and a regular interest in what is happening in Latvia.

Chapter 7 by Daiga Kamerāde and Ieva Skubiņa continues the exploration of the Latvian emigrant community in Great Britain. Their research angle, however, is a focus on the future of the Latvian emigrant community in this country. The chapter explores the formation of national and transnational identity among the 1.5 generation migrant children – the children born in Latvia but growing up in Great Britain – from the perspective of their parents. Based on evidence from semi-structured interviews, this chapter shows that the 1.5 generation Latvian migrants are on a path to become English-dominant bilinguals. There is a tendency towards an active integration and assimilation into the new host country either facilitated by their parents or occurring despite their parents' efforts to maintain ties with Latvia.

Chapter 8 by Jurkane-Hobein and Evija Kļave extends the focus on identity formation among migrants from ethnic minorities, an angle often overlooked in research. By analysing 30 life histories of self-identified Russian-speaking migrants from Latvia in Sweden and Great Britain, this chapter shows that in addition to the migration history of their families, the migrants' own migration patterns create interlinked and sometimes conflicting layers of transnational identity. The analysis in this chapter distinguishes three main processes in the formation of identity: aspiring to a Latvian identity, claiming an unrecognised Russian-speaking Latvian iden-

tity, and developing transnational ‘non-belonging’. Thus, this chapter provides useful insights into how social integration patterns between majority and minority at home are repeated in the emigrant community in the new host country.

A different perspective on migrant identity formation through the lens of the impact of transnational media and culture is presented in Chap. 9 by Laura Sūna, examining how Latvian migrants in Germany feel and experience their belonging to Latvia and its culture. Using evidence generated via in-depth interviews, open media diaries and network maps of Latvian emigrants in Germany, Sūna argues that culture is shaping the transnational self-perception of Latvian migrants in Germany as it provides collective narratives of imagined common frames of references and confirms processes of ‘belonging’ and ‘distinction’.

The question of the welcome the integrated emigrant community affords newcomers from the same country of origin is addressed by Andris Saulitis and Inta Mieriņa in Chap. 10. This studies the relationships and interaction among Latvian emigrants from different migration waves in the United States. It specifically examines reasons for the inability of the existing ‘old’ Latvian diaspora community, formed as a result of the events of World War II, to integrate late twentieth and early twenty-first century newcomers from Latvia into it. This chapter presents *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey and semi-structured interview data analysis. The chapter concludes that newcomers distance themselves from the already-formed emigrant community. They do not have an active engagement with Latvians back home. Instead, these migrants base their belonging on the notion of having roots in Europe in terms of cultural heritage and identity. For them, there is no return home, as they only look forward.

Bucholtz and Sūna conclude this section of the book with a focus on the role of social technologies in the life of contemporary migrants. This chapter analyses how ethnic transnational identities are manifested and negotiated on the social networking sites used by Latvian migrants. The empirical data in the chapter comes from 20 semi-structured interviews with Latvian migrants in different countries and *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey. The results presented in this chapter demonstrate that migrant interactions on social networking sites do not necessarily lead to the homogenisation of concepts of what ‘being a Latvian’ means to migrants. Results show that a migrant can identify with the host society yet still reject some of its characteristics – and choose Latvian alternatives instead.

The third and final part of the volume contains two chapters focused on return migration and related national policies from the perspective of contemporary migrants.

In Chap. 12 Evija Kļave and Inese Šūpule juxtapose normative return migration policy in Latvia and the experiences of return migrants. This chapter considers the extent to which return policy activities correspond to the needs and expectations of return migrants, and addresses the role of this policy in the process of making the decision to return. Evidence in this chapter consists of policy documents, *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey and in-depth interviews. This chapter finds that the national return migration policy has no impact on individual return decisions among Latvian migrants, as the main reasons for return are non-economic.

Coming back is connected to homesickness and also eliminating the risk of assimilation for their children in the host country society.

The final chapter in the volume concludes with Rita Kaša exploring the effectiveness of government policy in prompting return migration. The focus of this chapter is on a specific policy measure – that of student debt forgiveness for international graduates who return and work in positions of social value. Based on qualitative semi-structured interviews, this chapter shows that offering debt forgiveness for former students abroad who return to take jobs at home in specific public sector roles does not prompt return migration among graduates at universities abroad. Evidence from *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey in this chapter suggests that regardless of the source of their higher education funding, the intention to stay abroad dominates among Latvian international students. Yet, curiously enough, the intentions to return are more common among international students who have paid for their studies either with money from their family or with a student loan from the Latvian government.

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**Part I**  
**Contemporary Latvian Migration**

# Chapter 2

## An Integrated Approach to Surveying Emigrants Worldwide



Inta Mierīņa

### 2.1 Research on Migrants: Challenges and Solutions

Research into emigrant communities – especially quantitative research – is one of the most complicated types of research. The collection of information is made more difficult by the fluid nature of migration as well as the wide distribution of the diaspora and the scarcity of information about the migrants in each community. So far the most common approach for studying migrants has been single-country studies that analyse immigrants from multiple countries of origin in one destination country. There are also a few longitudinal panel surveys<sup>1</sup> that allow tracking the situation of migrants over time.<sup>2</sup> Although informative, single-country studies offer only limited insight into the impact of policies or context (Bilgili et al. 2015).

The most common source of comparative cross-national data on migrants in many countries is the EU Labour Force Survey (LFS). It contains a large sample of households and extensive data on immigrants' education and their position in the labour market (Fassmann and Musil 2013; Huddleston et al. 2013).<sup>3</sup> However, the

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<sup>1</sup> The German Socio-Economic Panel, the Dutch immigrant panel survey 2010–2014 (Martinovic et al. 2009), the National Immigrant Survey of Spain (Reher and Requena 2009); the Longitudinal Study of Migrant Workers in the East of England (Schneider and Holman 2011), the Longitudinal Survey on the Careers and Profiles of Newly Arrived or Regularized Migrants in France (Simon and Steichen 2014).

<sup>2</sup> Administrative registers are a useful source of information (Kraler and Reichel 2010). However, register data is not always timely or comparable due to differences in definitions and questions, and sometimes lacks data on the country of birth or citizenship. Importantly, it often lacks the necessary richness for an in-depth analysis of the causes or consequences of migration.

<sup>3</sup> In 2008 a special model on migrants and their descendants was added to the LFS. The same year the European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey (EU-MIDIS) survey was conducted. In

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LFS has significant methodological drawbacks and limitations linked to the fact that it is not aimed specifically at migrants (European Commission 2008; Marti and Rodenas 2007). For example, it does not include information on the aim of immigration, language skills or the migrants' situation before migrating. Another limitation is that the LFS is mainly focused on labour market outcomes and provides little insight into other aspects that have recently become a matter of increasing concern, mainly, those linked to socio-cultural integration (Bijl and Verweij 2012; Bilgili et al. 2015; Ersanilli and Koopmans 2011). Another large scale pan-European survey, the European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) is also hampered by the problem of under-representation and a small number of immigrants (Eurostat 2011). As an alternative, some researchers (Aleksynska 2011; Connor and Koenig 2013; Dronkers and Vink 2012; Wright and Bloemraad 2012) pool data from the small sub-samples of migrants in several waves of the major cross-sectional surveys (usually, the European Social Survey). However, this approach is problematic due to differences in measurement time, definitions and questions, the lack of migration-relevant control variables and most importantly, problems with matching 'pooled-over-time' data (Bilgili et al. 2015; Ersanilli and Koopmans 2013).

A small but growing number of studies employ a double comparative design which looks at more than one immigrant group and more than one destination country (Aleksynska 2011; Fleischmann and Dronkers 2007; Vink et al. 2013; Voicu and Comsa 2014), considering that the situation of immigrants may be affected by the country from which they come (the 'origin effect'); the country to which they migrate (the 'destination effect') and the specific relations between origins and destinations (the 'community effect'). Among the most prominent of such studies are: LIMITS – *The Immigrants and Ethnic Minorities in European Cities: Life courses and Quality of Life in a World of Limitations* study (2004); SCIICS – *Six Country Immigrant Integration Comparative Survey* (2008) (Crul et al. 2012; Ersanilli and Koopmans 2013); TIES – *The Integration of the European Second Generation* survey (2007) (Reichel 2010; Westin 2015); MAFE – *The Migration between Africa and Europe project* (between 2008 and 2010) (Crul et al. 2012; Schoumaker and Beauchemin 2015); SCIP – *The Causes and Consequences of Early Socio-Cultural Integration Processes among New Immigrants in Europe* panel study (2013) (Platt et al. 2015). Unfortunately, due to financial and methodological limitations, these and most other existing comparative surveys (e.g., Eurostat/NIDI 2000; Koopmans 2010; Phinney et al. 2006; YMOBILITY), including those conducted with migrants from ECE (Ambrosini et al. 2012; CRONEM 2006; Kogan 2003) cover just a handful of destinations, yet strictly speaking they cannot mathematically disentangle the effect of various contextual factors that vary across countries (Bloemraad and Wright 2014; Koopmans 2013). The only solution that would allow the direct measurement of the effect of various contextual features, while also controlling for other micro and macro-level confounders, is multilevel regression analysis that includes a

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2014 a special model on migration *The Labour Market Situation of Migrants and their Immediate Descendants* was again conducted as part of the LFS, yet the questions are retrospective and the scope of questions are very limited, related mainly to the labour market.

significant number of destination countries (Arzheimer 2009; Bilgili et al. 2015; van Tubergen et al. 2004).

In order to obtain reliable results on migrants, sample size and sample design are of crucial importance. Due to the lack of reliable sampling frames from which to sample migrants in the majority of EU countries, previous quantitative studies of emigrants in Europe have relied on methods such as simple snowball sampling, respondent-driven sampling (for example SCIP), Time-Location Sampling or quota sampling based on census data and recruiting respondents at places they usually attend. Due to the high costs of fieldwork involving face-to-face interviews with small minority groups, these methods are usually applied in a narrow geographic space (a selected number of cities or neighbourhoods) and as such are not suited for analysing the effect of, for example, policies or other macro-level factors measured at the national level. Overall, tracing the 'liquid' East-West migrants at a particular place of residence might not be the most appropriate strategy (Eade and Garapich 2009).

Some researchers have used telephone surveys and name sampling from published phone books, registers and/or directories. In a few countries (e.g., the Netherlands) researchers have been able to randomly select respondents from official databases. Unfortunately, such sampling frames are only available to researchers in a few countries and cannot ensure a broad representation of countries. A very promising approach was undertaken by the SEEMIG project LFS Pilot survey 'Migrations' in 2013 which tried to build the sample of emigrants from Hungary and Serbia based on referrals and contact information on relatives abroad provided by the LFS respondents. Unfortunately, this approach did not provide the expected results (Fassmann and Musil 2013). Instead, it demonstrated that it is not realistic to build a large representative sample of emigrants through a big, highly formalised national survey. One can conclude that none of these approaches is able to achieve a significant sample size in many countries without incurring huge costs that would render the study unfeasible.

The solution applied in *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* project includes several novel elements and tackles many of the problems of the previous studies. It draws on the fact that the Internet and social media have become an inseparable part of many migrants' lives. With the prevalence of Internet use, online surveys are becoming increasingly more popular and commonplace. The biggest advantage of web surveys is the possibility of achieving a large sample in a substantial number of countries. However, there are other advantages to using a web survey that are expected to facilitate the willingness of respondents to cooperate and answer the questions truthfully. These are:

- (i) The possibility of anonymity, which should ensure a better representation of irregular migrants than in previous studies;
- (ii) The ability for respondents to fill in the questionnaire at any time, and even to stop and continue later;
- (iii) The possibility of using simple and anonymous referrals, ie; to 'share' the survey via Facebook, Twitter, etc. Methodological studies have shown that the way web surveys are conducted is unlikely to lead to distortions in comparison with other survey modes (Grandcolas et al. 2003).

The greatest risks associated with web surveys are the potential bias caused by self-selection and the difficulties of reaching certain socio-demographic groups via the Internet (Askatas and Zimmermann 2015; Bethlehem 2010). However, Eurostat data on Internet use are encouraging as they show that in the EU 78% of people 16 years of age or older have used the Internet during the last 3 months (Eurostat 2014). In the 16–24 age group, 94% are regular Internet users and 89% participate in social networking. Considering that most emigrants are young people (Fuller and Ward 2011) and the Internet is important for migrants as a cheap means of communication with their friends and families at home, the percentage of Internet users among migrants – especially young migrants – can be predicted to be very high. Nevertheless, certain discrepancies and imbalances with regard to the representation of various socio-demographic groups among survey respondents might remain.

## 2.2 Collection of the Quantitative Data

### 2.2.1 Geographic Coverage and the Target Group

The *Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey had the widest possible geographic coverage. It did not impose any limitations as to the geographic location of respondents, aiming at all countries in the world. Any Latvian or Latvian national abroad could participate in the survey, regardless of his or her current country of residence. The majority of our respondents – reflecting the Latvian diaspora in general – come from the UK, Ireland, the US, Germany, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium, Russia, Canada, Finland, France and Austria, and in total 118 countries are represented in the dataset. For comparison, we also show, in Table 2.1, the distribution of Latvian nationals in different countries around the world according to the official statistics.

*The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* is the most inclusive migration study so far in terms of the target audience. All Latvians and Latvian nationals abroad were invited to participate in the survey, applying a broad and open definition of ‘Latvian diaspora’, based on identification with the Latvian nation and/or citizenship. Some respondents belonged to a minority ethnic group yet still felt ‘Latvian’ or ‘Latvian nationals’. Others may have given up their Latvian citizenship, or never had it in the first place, yet it did not preclude them from feeling like part of the Latvian diaspora. Nine hundred three respondents (6.4% of the total) belong to the ‘old diaspora’,<sup>4</sup> i.e., those who left Latvia before 1991, whereas the majority are members of the ‘new diaspora’ (Fig. 2.1).

In general surveys (e.g., the EU Labour Force Survey or EU SILC) people who are unable to communicate in the survey language are sometimes not interviewed, which excludes a significant proportion of migrants. This is not the case for our

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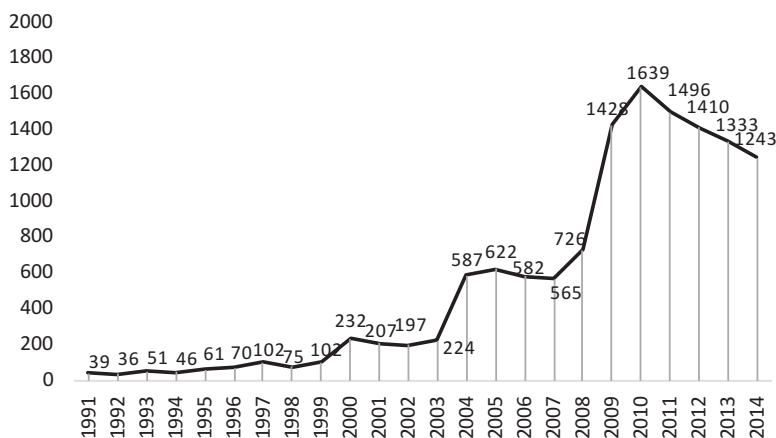
<sup>4</sup>Most members of the ‘old diaspora’ emigrated at the end of 1940s to the beginning of the 1950s.

**Table 2.1** Numbers of Latvian nationals responding per country (%)

		Respondents		Latvian nationals in the world		Those who emigrated since 2000	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
1	UK	4954	35.2	70,502	33.3	67,359	43.8
2	Germany	1476	10.5	20,820	9.8	19,565	12.7
3	Ireland	1223	8.7	16,557	7.8	15,557	10.1
4	Norway	838	6.0	7071	3.3	7352	4.8
5	USA	810	5.8	28,272	13.4	3270	2.1
6	Sweden	569	4.0	3679	1.7	4587	3.0
7	Denmark	471	3.3	3621	1.7	3702	2.4
8	Netherlands	399	2.8	2699	1.3	2859	1.9
9	Russia	370	2.6	8851	4.2	3180	2.1
10	Belgium	270	1.9	1374	0.6	1504	1.0
11	Canada	233	1.7	8287	3.9	1377	0.9
12	Finland	225	1.6	1093	0.5	1205	0.8
13	France	208	1.5	3550	1.7	3051	2.0
14	Austria	203	1.4	847	0.4	742	0.5
15	Spain	173	1.2	3993	1.9	3859	2.5
16	Italy	162	1.2	2074	1.0	2092	1.4
17	Australia	160	1.1	9984	4.7	222	0.1
18	Switzerland	133	0.9	1421	0.7	1629	1.1
19	Estonia	107	0.8	2436	1.2	2144	1.4
20	Iceland	92	0.7	556	0.3	612	0.4
21	Cyprus	76	0.5	951	0.4	978	0.6
22	Luxembourg	70	0.5	436	0.2	394	0.3
23	Lithuania	60	0.4	941	0.4	508	0.3
24	Greece	58	0.4	351	0.2	420	0.3
25	Czech Republic	52	0.4	270	0.1	332	0.2
26	UAE	48	0.3	96	<0.1	96	0.1
27	Turkey	42	0.3	147	0.1	156	0.1
28	Ukraine	41	0.3	1433	0.7	330	0.2
29	Portugal	40	0.3	328	0.2	526	0.3
30	Belarus	39	0.3	1215	0.6	279	0.2
31	Israel	36	0.3	4111	1.9	1243	0.8
32	Brazil	35	0.2	482	0.2	333	0.2
33	Poland	34	0.2	334	0.2	1207	0.8
34	China	28	0.2	36	<0.1	35	<0.1
35	New Zealand	26	0.2	367	0.2	86	0.1
36	Other	298	2.0	2292	1.1	1156	0.8
37	NA	9	0.1				
		14,068	100.0	211,477	100.0	153,947	100.0

Source: The author, based on The Emigrant Communities of Latvia survey

Only countries with more than 50 respondents are presented in the table. The figures include only those aged 15 years or older. The information about Latvian nationals abroad and emigration since 2000 is based on the calculations of Maris Goldmanis (2015) using statistics from official sources such as OECD, Eurostat, national statistical offices, etc



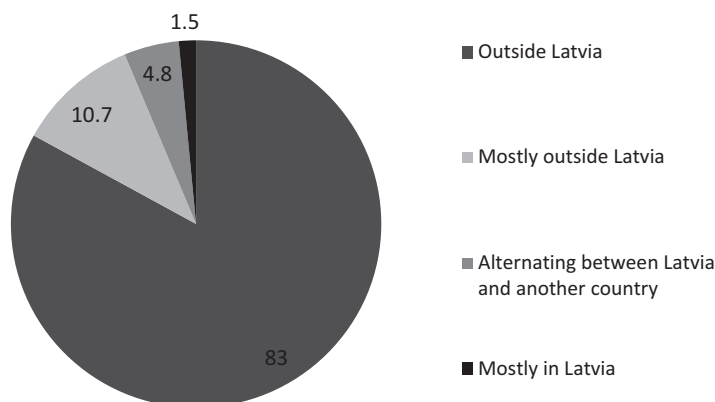
**Fig. 2.1** The year of departure (survey question: when did you start living in [country]?). (Source: The author, based on *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey. Note: The figure does not include those respondents who emigrated before 1991)

survey. The questionnaire was produced in Latvian, Russian and English and there are very few Latvian emigrants not able to speak at least one of these languages. Careful procedures were applied in translating the Russian and English versions. Overall, 10% of respondents filled out the questionnaire in Russian and 1% in English. The rest completed it in Latvian.

In this survey we also consider the liquid nature and diverse patterns of migration. An increasing number of emigrants do not settle permanently in just one country, but alternate between countries or have a home in both. According to our survey, the proportion of such people among emigrants is 17% (Fig. 2.2). They were also included in the survey.

The lower age limit of the survey is set at 15 years old as for younger children parental consent would be required in Latvia. A few respondents who were under 15 were excluded from the dataset.

Sometimes a bias in the sample might occur due to people with plenty of free time being more likely to complete the survey than, for example, those who are very busy and/or at work. This survey applied an innovative approach, offering respondents an opportunity to fill in a shorter version of the questionnaire (20 min) or the full version of the questionnaire (30 min). Those who chose the shorter version were presented with one of two rotating modules, while the core questions of the questionnaire were maintained for all respondents. This methodological innovation allowed the inclusion of more questions in the survey and helped reduce the loss of respondents due to attrition. Of our respondents, 66% chose to fill in the full version. After the survey period the average length of the interview was calculated at 35 min, showing high levels of motivation among respondents to voice their opinion. Our survey design also made it possible to take a break from filling in the questionnaire and return to it later.



**Fig. 2.2** Place of residence. (Source: The author, based on *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey)

## 2.2.2 Fieldwork and Recruitment of Respondents

The survey was conducted as a Web-survey, using different methods of recruiting respondents:

- Social networking sites: [facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com), [draugiem.lv](https://www.draugiem.lv), [vkontakte.com](https://www.vkontakte.com), [odnoklassniki.ru](https://www.odnoklassniki.ru), [latviesi.com](https://www.latviesi.com).
- The three largest news portals in Latvia: [delfi.lv](https://www.delfi.lv), [apollo.lv](https://www.apollo.lv), [inbox.lv](https://www.inbox.lv).
- Embassies, diaspora organisations, diaspora media, etc.

Researchers prepared a list of dissemination channels where information about the survey could be sent. It included 187 different diaspora organisations, diaspora associations (choirs, dance collectives, etc.), Latvian cultural centres, parishes and other organisations popular among the Latvian diaspora. In most cases, they were contacted electronically but sometimes the information pamphlets and posters were delivered physically, to be distributed among members of these organisations. Information pamphlets and posters were also distributed with the help of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to almost all Latvian embassies in Europe, and placed there for visitors to see (Fig. 2.3). This was an efficient way of disseminating information, as parliamentary elections took place during the fieldwork. This meant that many of our target group visited the embassy to vote at the polling station.

In addition, online groups of Latvian diaspora members were researched, and information about the survey distributed to them too. Information about the survey was distributed to 37 representatives of diaspora newspapers. Many re-published the press releases and placed the information banners on their website, asking readers to participate in the survey. With the help of the state language agency, the information was sent out to the Latvian school network abroad, which includes more than 100 weekend schools.

### Pamphlet

**Pamphlet**

### Poster

**Poster**

Fig. 2.3 Information materials used to recruit respondents

In order to inform more people about the project, distribute information about how to take part in the survey and raise motivation to participate, researchers engaged in regular interviews with various media, including releasing some initial results. Interviews were given both to Latvian and Russian media. Three press releases were prepared and distributed, informing potential respondents about the survey. Researchers also took part in several conferences presenting interim as well as final results. The link to the questionnaire together with an invitation to participate in the survey was placed on the project website [www.migracija.lv](http://www.migracija.lv), in Latvian, Russian and English. People filling in the questionnaires could also Tweet information about the project from the website, or share it on Facebook, Google+, etc. with their friends and acquaintances, which many did.

Many respondents were recruited via the social media site draugiem.lv which is one of the most popular social networking sites in Latvia. Considering that some emigrants might prefer other social networking sites, respondents were also recruited by placing information about the survey on [facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com), [vkontakte.com](https://www.vkontakte.com), [odnoklasniki.ru](https://odnoklasniki.ru), and [latviesi.com](http://latviesi.com).



**Table 2.2** Respondent recruitment channels

Recruitment sites	%
migracija.lv	23.6
<a href="#">aptauja.migracija.lv</a>	14.7
draugiem.lv <sup>a</sup>	10.1
TvNet LAT	6.2
Share buttons LAT	1.9
AdWords LAT	1.7
Delfi RUS	1.1
<a href="#">Latviesi.com</a>	1.1
TvNet RUS	.9
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	.9
Odnoklassniki	.9
Vkontakte	.7
Share buttons RUS	.5
Delfi LAT	.5
Other	.5
Unidentified	34.6

<sup>a</sup>draugiem.lv statistics for the first day of placing the information on the website are based on estimates

Another important, 10 channel for recruiting respondents was through news sites online. The three largest news portals in Latvia: Delfi, TvNet (and Apollo), and Inbox displayed information about the project on their websites in Latvian and Russian for almost the entire period of fieldwork.

Information banners were also placed on other websites frequented by Latvians abroad: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, the State Employment Agency, the Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments and several municipality websites.

In order to reach emigrants who are comparatively inactive, i.e., they do not read news portals, use social networking sites or attend any institutions or organisations, information about the survey was also distributed using Google AdWords. Invitations to take part in the survey were shown to people who used Google search engines from outside Latvia and searched (in Latvian or Russian) for keywords such as Latvian embassy, Latvia, news in Latvia, work in the UK, Latvians in Ireland, Latvijas Radio 2, etc.

The statistical overview in Table 2.2 shows that 23.6% of respondents whose path to the questionnaire could be identified clicked on the link on the project website [www.migracija.lv](#). These are people who heard or read about the project in the media, saw the information posters in embassies or organisations or were told about the survey by their friends or relatives, etc. Another 14.7% used the direct link to the questionnaire. It is most likely they found the link in one of the media publications or were sent the link by their friends. Approximately 10% of those whose path to the questionnaire could be identified were informed about, and attracted to the survey,



via the social networking site draugiem.lv. Another very important source of recruiting respondents was the TvNet news portal in Latvian (6.2%).

Among the Russian language recruiting channels, the most important were the news portal Delfi RUS, followed by Odnoklassniki and V Kontakte. These figures do not give a very precise account of how many respondents each of these portals/sources attracted, as it is possible that the information was seen and interest created by one information source but the respondent clicked on the questionnaire from some other place (eg., the project website).

The fieldwork took place between 4th August and 31st October 2014. To increase response rates, the deadline for filling in the questionnaire was extended twice.

### ***2.2.3 Cleaning the Dataset and Final Sample Size***

The dataset was rigorously cleaned before analysis commenced. The initial dataset contained 15,760 entries.

- First, we excluded from the dataset 1235 questionnaires where the respondent had answered only the first few questions. We assumed that most of them are people simply checking what the survey was about, so the answers would not be reliable.
- 408 entries were identified as duplicates and deleted;
- five entries were excluded due to them not meeting the age requirements (<15 years of age);
- 43 questionnaires were excluded on the basis of low reliability. The logical checks developed to test the logical consistency of answers showed them as 'not reliable'.

The total number of interviews in the final dataset was 14,068. Of these, 9284 respondents (66% of the total number) filled in the questionnaire to the end and 4784 partially completed it.<sup>5</sup> This substantial number of respondents makes it the largest survey of emigrants from one country to others ever conducted in Europe. Based on estimates of the size of the Latvian diaspora, more than 5% of Latvian diaspora members abroad participated in the survey.

### ***2.2.4 Correcting the Biases by Using Survey Weights***

The various groups in the diaspora population differ both in the intensity of their internet use and in their willingness to volunteer as survey participants. Self-selection associated with web surveys (Bethlehem 2010; Grandcolas et al. 2003) is

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<sup>5</sup>Only questionnaires where more than eight questions were answered were considered. Most 'partial questionnaires' included answers to at least one-third of all the questions.

known to lead to under-representation among certain socio-demographic groups (McCollum and Apsite-Berina 2015). In *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey, men were under-represented relative to women (inclusion probability was 1.8 times lower for men than for women); older respondents were under-represented relative to younger respondents (inclusion probability of those 55 or older was 2.6 times lower than among those 15–24), and individuals with lower educational achievement were under-represented relative to those with higher educational achievement (inclusion probability was 4.5 times lower) (Goldmanis 2015). However, the largest discrepancies were observed with regard to the ethnic division: the inclusion probability of Russians was 6.6 times lower than that of Latvians (overall 21% of respondents spoke Russian at home before leaving the country). No imbalance was observed with regard to the type of settlement.<sup>6</sup> In the presence of unequal respondent inclusion probabilities, the sample was likely to yield biased (and inconsistent) estimates of population parameters. To correct for this, we applied survey weights that were inversely proportional to the estimated inclusion probabilities of respondents, conditional on a series of socio-demographic variables, including sex, age, level of education and occupation. It is well known that if these control variables captured most of the variation in inclusion probabilities, then the weighted data would yield (approximately) unbiased and consistent estimators (Horvitz and Thompson 1952). The conditional inclusion probabilities were estimated on the basis of official statistics on the distribution of immigrants from each country of origin in each country of destination, as provided by several sources:

- (a) The OECD Database on Immigrants in OECD Countries (DIOC) 2010–2011;
- (b) The OECD International Migration Database;
- (c) Eurostat (datasets migr\_pop3ctb and migr\_pop1ctz);
- (d) National Statistics Offices of destination countries;
- (e) National Statistics Offices of the countries of origin.

To approximate the joint distribution of various control variables, a raking (data balancing) algorithm was applied to produce a joint distribution that has marginal distributions corresponding to those given by the external data (as in Battaglia et al. 2004).<sup>7</sup>

If the socio-demographic variables used for the computation of weights fully determined the inclusion probabilities, the weighted data would be fully representative of the underlying population (i.e., they would yield fully unbiased and consistent estimates of all population parameters of interest). However, we have to concede that in practice these inclusion probabilities will also be affected by a series of additional factors that we were unable to correct for with survey weights, either because these factors were truly unobservable or latent (such as a respon-

<sup>6</sup>A more detailed methodological analysis of how well the Web survey has managed to reach different socio-demographic groups (i.e., people of different age, gender, education, occupation, employment status, type of settlement), is discussed in Mieriņa and Koroļeva's (2015) article.

<sup>7</sup>A more detailed description of the research methodology and the design of statistical weights is available in Mieriņa and Koroļeva (2015) and Goldmanis (2015).

dent's intrinsic propensity to volunteer to participate in surveys) or because we had no reliable data on the distribution of these factors in the population (as was the case with the distribution of Latvian immigrants by occupation in the aforementioned Latvian survey). Hence, some residual deviations from full representativeness will remain. However, these deviations are likely to be minor, of an order of magnitude similar to the deviations that non-response would cause in a simple random sample.

The latter point is worth reiterating. While an inherently self-selected sample such as occurs in a web survey might seem fundamentally different from a properly random sample (even with non-response), the stochastic processes determining the final sample in both cases are in fact almost identical, as long as there is a substantial non-response in the simple random sample and all individuals in the population have the positive probability of being included in the 'self-selected' web sample. Regardless of whether the respondents' choice is one of opting in (as in the web survey) or opting out (as in the simple random sample), this choice will nonetheless result in ultimate inclusion probabilities that depend on the characteristics of the individual respondents. Correcting for variation in these probabilities in the case of a web survey is exactly equivalent to using post-stratification weighting to correct for non-response in the case of a random sample. The differences between the two cases are only ones of degree, with variations in inclusion probabilities likely to be larger in the case of the self-selected sample. The bias can increase if the study relies on just one source of recruiting respondents. Hence, in order to improve the representativeness of the sample and to reach different respondents in terms of age, gender, occupation and other characteristics, it is important to employ a wide range of different recruitment channels to reach groups with differing characteristics and using a variety of communication platforms and to aim at achieving as large a sample as possible, as achieved by *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* study (Koroļeva and Mieriņa 2015).

## 2.2.5 Data Storage and Protection

*The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* project treats the confidentiality of data and protection of respondents' identities with the utmost care. The dataset is stored on a safe server at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, accessible only to a restricted group of researchers. In order to protect the identity of respondents the interviews were anonymised by deleting any information with the potential to identify the respondent (such as their e-mail address if the respondent wrote it in the questionnaire, IP address, token information, etc.) before being placed on the safe server.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>The full non-anonymised dataset is available only to the Project Council and not available even to the project researchers.

In addition, all researchers signed a confidentiality declaration committing to non-disclosure of any information that could potentially identify respondents, and agreeing not to share the dataset outside the team of researchers for two years after the end of the project.

The personal data of respondents is not available and will not be made available to any other organisations or institutions [state or other] outside the University of Latvia and the team of project researchers. It is only analysed in an aggregated way, following the best scientific praxis.

## 2.3 Collection of the Qualitative Data

### 2.3.1 *Target Group and Recruitment of Respondents*

As part of the project, 159 partly-structured in-depth interviews were conducted in countries where the Latvian diaspora is largest: the United Kingdom, Ireland, the United States, Germany, Sweden and Norway. In addition, in-depth interviews with return migrants (18) and diaspora policy experts (16) were conducted in Latvia. The target group of in-depth interviews were representatives of the ‘new diaspora’, i.e., those who left Latvia after 1991. In-depth interviews with representatives of the ‘old diaspora’ have been covered to a much larger extent in previous research by, for example, Baiba Bela, Ilze Garoza, Māra Zirnīte, Ieva Garda and others (Bela 2010; Zirnīte 2010; Zirnīte and Lielbārdis 2015).

Several researchers and experts were involved in the collection of data, and the methodology was strictly coordinated between them. Respondents were recruited using social networking sites ([facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com), [linkedin.com](https://www.linkedin.com), [maminklub.lv](https://www.maminklub.lv), [draugiem.lv](https://www.draugiem.lv)), organisations, institutions and in some cases snowballing and personal referrals. In cases where personal referrals were used, researchers avoided interviewing close friends and relatives. In instances where institutions, organisations and experts needed to be contacted, researchers agreed between themselves who the contact points would be in order to avoid inconsistencies in communication.

One of the priorities of the research team was to ensure the diversity of respondents in terms of:

- Age
- Gender
- Social class/employment status
- Time spent abroad
- Family status (e.g. children/no children)

This strategy ensured that the interviews provided insight into the motivation and attitudes of people with different life experiences and socio-economic backgrounds. Most researchers applied grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin 1990), aiming to

achieve ‘theoretical sampling’ and ‘data saturation’ as precisely as possible when recruiting respondents.

No monetary compensation was offered to respondents but where possible researchers left behind information booklets about the project, as well as business cards with their contact information in case respondents had any questions. In some cases, token symbols of gratitude were left in the form of chocolates or sweets. Respondents were also informed about the quantitative survey and invited to participate in that too.

### **2.3.2 Interview Guidelines**

To ensure that information on certain themes and issues can be compared across a number of countries, some topics were included in all of the in-depth interviews with emigrants. Most of these topics also mirror the topics of the quantitative survey. This ensures the successful integration of quantitative and qualitative data. Hence, in-depth interviews have the potential to provide a deeper understanding of the quantitative data. With some variations, the topics included in all in-depth interviews with emigrants were as follows:

- Descriptions of the migration experience, motivation for emigration and, where applicable, return migration;
- Articulation of identity, sense of belonging, historical memory, celebration of festivities;
- Significance of family, children, parents, social networks and the maintenance of social contacts in emigration and after returning to Latvia; social networking online, use of social media;
- Education in Latvia and abroad;
- Employment, professional mobility and acquisition of information on employment opportunities;
- Return migration plan: evaluation and impact on personal decisions on whether to return or not.

Interviews were conducted as partly structured in-depth interviews, following interview guidelines. The method also allowed for some flexibility with regard to getting more detailed information on some emerging topics important for a better understanding of the specific research question. The guidelines differed from one location and one researcher to the next, depending on the main topic of interest. Draft guidelines were developed on each of the aforementioned topics which the researchers built on in their interviews, in addition to the main prescribed topics of the interview. The full guidelines were checked and approved by the coordinators of the qualitative research group. The length of the interviews with adults ranged from 26 min to 2 h 16 min, with most interviews taking slightly more than 1 h. Interviews with children were shorter.

### 2.3.3 *Data Storage and Protection*

All in-depth interviews were transcribed and stored on a safe server at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, accessible only by the administrative assistant and a restricted group of researchers from the project. Researchers prepared a description of each interview (an interview protocol) including basic information on the interview and the respondent such as:

- The language of the interview, length of interview, place of interview, interviewer;
- Place of birth of the respondent, country of emigration, time spent abroad, age, education, gender, family status, children, employment status, citizenship, history of activism;
- Main topics of the interview, including respondent's opinion or experience with regard to the topic.

The interview protocols are important for the in-depth understanding and interpretation of answers in the light of the respondent's socio-demographic characteristics, as well as the specific circumstances that the respondent is or was in. These protocols also make it easier to find necessary information in the interview material, for example, if the researcher wants to analyse what people of certain characteristics say about the topic in different countries, or how respondents of different characteristics feel.

Before being placed on the safe server the interviews were anonymised, in order to protect the identity of respondents. In addition, all researchers signed confidentiality declarations, committing to non-disclosure of the personal information of their respondents.

Agreement was reached with the Latvian National Oral History Centre about the possibility of archiving and depositing the interviews in the Centre's Archive ([www.dzivesstasts.lv](http://www.dzivesstasts.lv)). This would allow the interview material to have more impact on the scientific community, and be preserved for many years as a testimony of our time. A consent form was prepared and presented to the respondents.<sup>9</sup> Respondents were asked if they would agree to their interview being deposited in the National Oral History Centre Archive (led by Dr. Māra Zirnīte), and if so in the specific form it could be accessed (including whether the respondent's name could be disclosed or not) and to whom (for instance, just the researcher, the project researchers, University of Latvia researchers or anyone). They were also asked to specify any other limitations on use of the interview. If the respondent did not agree that the interview could be included in the Archive, their wish was respected, and the interview was not deposited. This procedure also related to interviews where the consent forms were not offered and not collected. If the respondent allowed the interview to be deposited in the archive but did not permit disclosure of their name, the anonym-

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<sup>9</sup>As this agreement was reached only at the end of summer 2014 these forms were not used in the initial interviews and this material was not considered for archiving.

ity of the respondent was ensured as the consent form is not publicly available, and the entry was saved with a pseudonym and entry code.

## 2.4 Conclusions and Discussion

*The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* project has made an important theoretical and methodological contribution to the field of migration studies, and has laid foundations for future research on emigrants, specifically from the perspective of sending countries.

The main contribution of the project concerns the quantitative data collection. Compared to previous studies, it has a number of important methodological advantages:

1. By conducting a survey aimed specifically at emigrants we avoided the limitations typical of general surveys (ESS, ISSP, Eurobarometer), which are mainly that the sub-groups of immigrants are too small for meaningful analysis (Ersanilli and Koopmans 2013; Kraler and Reichel 2010);
2. By developing a new questionnaire instead of relying on existing sources of data we allowed the inclusion of all the necessary items and crucial social background variables that the available studies such as the EU LFS do not always cover (Ersanilli and Koopmans 2013; Kraler and Reichel 2010, Reichel 2010; Westin 2015).

In surveys such as the LFS people who are unable to communicate in the official language or languages of the country are not interviewed, thus effectively excluding a significant proportion of migrants. This results in a bias against immigrants whose proficiency in the language of their country of residence is not good enough to answer survey questions (Chiswick et al. 2004; Dronkers and Vink 2012; Platt et al. 2015). This is not the case for this survey. The questionnaire was produced in three languages: in the official language of the country of origin, namely Latvian, as well as in English and Russian.

Immigrants with an unstable or irregular legal status in the country of residence might avoid participating in regular population surveys (Dronkers and Vink 2012). The anonymity provided by a web survey can encourage them to participate.

Harmonisation of translations, methods and weighting is often problematic in major cross-national surveys. In our case, the data collection and weighting was centrally coordinated, careful translation procedures were applied and the questionnaire was completed in the language the respondent understood best. The quality of questionnaires was further tested using cognitive interviews and web probing (Behr et al. 2012; Willis 2005).

While this study employed a sophisticated procedure to calculate statistical weights, reaching those who do not use the Internet is still a legitimate concern in these kinds of studies, especially those in marginal groups, such as the poor and uneducated, people on the street, Roma communities and those working in low-paid

agricultural jobs deep in the countryside, and in countries where Internet penetration is lowest. The marginal groups likely to be under-represented or missing in a web survey (outlined above) might be especially important for certain kinds of analysis. To address this drawback of web surveys it would be best in the future to include a supplementary survey of non-Internet users, aiming at those who do not or practically do not use the Internet (e.g.; have not used it in the past 3 months).

Another challenge is that studies conducted at one point in time are unable to overcome the endogeneity problem and to rule out the possibility of reverse causality between integration policies and societal outcomes, as this relationship may be bi-directional or dynamic (Bilgili et al. 2015). Hence, it is important to have information on immigrants at various points in the settlement process (Platt et al. 2015). Monitoring the newcomers that arrived in the country at a certain point in time provides the best data for evaluating the integration process and allows the factors behind different life trajectories to be revealed (Bilgili et al. 2015; Kraler and Reichel 2010; Reichel 2010; Wingens et al. 2011). In contrast, a simple comparison of two moments in time, such as in cross-sectional studies, relates in part to different groups of individuals and does not make it possible to distinguish the time effect (an effect of the length of residence in the country) from the cohort effect (an effect of arriving in the country at a certain period of time). Despite the clear advantages of longitudinal data, in migration studies they are rare (Kraler and Reichel 2010). Sometimes researchers use a synthetic cohort design combining different surveys (Martinovic et al. 2009; Beauchemin et al. 2010) but it is not an ideal solution. Therefore, research should, whenever possible, aim at a longitudinal panel design. In *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey, respondents were asked if they would take part in future studies on migration, and if so, to leave an e-mail address where they could be sent an invitation to participate. Fifty-four percent of all respondents (7649 respondents in total) left their e-mail address to be used in future studies on migration, and even more people agreed to be contacted again in a recent study of Polish migrants in the UK (Platt et al. 2015). In contrast to previous studies (e.g., Schneider and Holman 2011), it would be best for the subsequent waves of the study to include those who have already returned home or re-emigrated (using an adjusted return-migrant questionnaire, similar to Krings et al. 2013), thus avoiding the potential bias caused by the fact that those who are not successful (e.g., the unemployed) or, by contrast, those who have achieved their emigration goals, are likely to return to their home countries (Kleinepiers et al. 2015; Stark 1991). In order to ensure the comparability of the first and subsequent waves of the study and to enable a comparison of various newcomer cohorts, the next waves should focus not just on those who expressed interest in participating in the first wave of the study, but essentially on replicating the research design of the first wave of the study – a similar strategy as used in the POLPAN longitudinal panel survey.

The use of qualitative methods in this study has also led to important insights, in particular with regard to situations when information is collected in different national contexts by researchers focusing on connected yet different themes. Coordination of interview guidelines and methods and careful planning is required



to allow overarching comparisons between contexts. Depositing qualitative interviews in a data archive has not so far become a gold standard among researchers yet it would be invaluable for making possible future use by other scholars of the material collected and, if the respondent agrees, the general public. Consent forms should always be used and should specify beforehand the various permissions and limitations with regard to use of any particular interview. Interview protocols containing the main information on respondents are useful for quickly navigating through the information collected.

Overall, this new methodology of surveying migrants has far-reaching potential to be applied to the study of various migrant groups in Europe and beyond. Importantly, the study described has tested and empirically proven the potential of Web surveys in collecting the opinions of large populations of migrants, and has provided insight into calculating survey weights for multiple countries based on external data.

The importance of evidence-based policy-making is being acknowledged by increasing numbers of experts, and in this context studies like *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* play a crucial role. The huge response from the partners of the project has been truly encouraging, proving that the Latvian diaspora has not lost touch with its homeland, and that there is great potential for future cooperation in the area of research and beyond.

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# Chapter 3

## Emigration from Latvia: A Brief History and Driving Forces in the Twenty-First Century



Mihails Hazans

### 3.1 Introduction

In recent years, Latvia has experienced waves of intense emigration, establishing it as one of the worst-affected among EU/EFTA member states. This is true with respect to both post-crisis emigration rates of working-age nationals (Fries-Tersch et al. 2017, Fig. 7–8) and the total (as of 2015) mobility rates of working-age nationals (Fries-Tersch et al. 2017, Fig. 9).<sup>1</sup> Remarkably, this finding is robust with respect to data source: the emigration rates come from migration statistics, while mobility rates are based on EU Labour Force Survey (LFS) data.

Emigration from Latvia is an interesting subject not only because of its intensity. In many other high emigration countries, population is a redundant factor, but this is not the case in Latvia. Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, loss of population due to emigration has been reinforced by negative natural change in all three Baltic countries, as well as in Bulgaria and Romania (Fig. 3.1). In 17 years (2000–2016), Latvia and Lithuania have lost the largest population shares (about 20%) among EU countries. Moreover, Latvia and Lithuania are among the top three countries (after Bulgaria) with the largest negative natural population changes during this period.

This contrasts with positive demographic developments in the main destination countries of Baltic migrants – the UK, Ireland, the Nordic countries, and Germany. Only Germany features negative natural change, but it is not as big as in Latvia and has been more than compensated by positive net migration (Fig. 3.1).

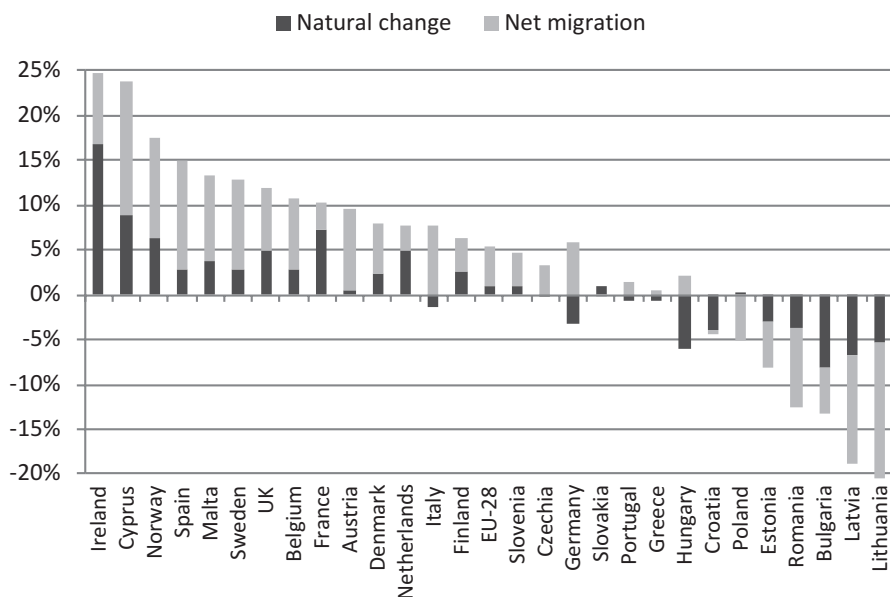
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<sup>1</sup>Latvia ranks second in both cases – after Lithuania in the former and after Romania (before Portugal and Lithuania) in the latter.

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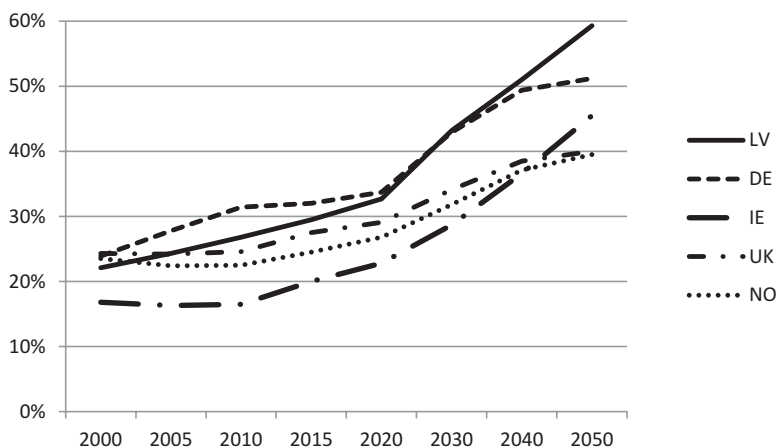
**Fig. 3.1** Natural change of population and net migration, 2000–2016. EU28+Norway. (Source: Calculation with Eurostat data. For the Baltic countries data and Poland, the migration statistics of destination countries have been used to correct national net migration data (see Hazans 2013, 2015a, 2016a, 2017a), thus increasing estimates of net migration outflows by 0.7–1.9 points for the Baltic countries and by 4.6 points for Poland)

Natural decrease of Latvia's population has been driven both by low total fertility rate (TFR)<sup>2</sup> and high mortality (especially among men).

Latvia's population is ageing steadily. Between 2000 and 2015 the percentage share of children and teenagers shrank, while the shares of those aged 40–64 and especially 65+ grew. The working-age population in Latvia is shrinking faster than in any OECD country except Japan (OECD 2016). In that period 2000–2015, the old age dependency ratio (OADR, 65+/15–64) in Latvia was higher and growing faster than in the main destination countries of Latvian migrants (except for Germany). According to the Eurostat baseline projection, by 2050 this ratio is expected to reach 60%, compared to 51% in Germany, 46% in Ireland and 40% in the UK and Norway (Fig. 3.2; see Fries-Tersch et al. 2017, Fig. 15 for similar evidence regarding OADR 65+/20–64 in 2030).

While at the start of the twenty-first century (covering the period 2000–2016) Latvia has been a country of labour emigration, in the twentieth century Latvia saw periods of economically motivated immigration, times of humanitarian catastrophes

<sup>2</sup>Latvia's TFR was well below that found in most destination countries in 2000–2014 but is recovering since and is expected to stabilise at about 1.85.



**Fig. 3.2** Old age dependency ratio 2000–2015 and forecast for 2020–2050. Latvia and the main destination countries of Latvian emigrants. (Source: Eurostat data and main scenario projections. Note: The old age dependency ratio (OADR) is the ratio of population aged 65+ to those aged 15–64)

and associated outflows of refugees and displaced persons, as well as mass deportations during periods of occupation and episodes of ethnically and politically driven emigration. There was also mass immigration of labour and military personnel which was centrally planned by the Soviet regime and, in addition, immigration of their families.

This chapter starts with a brief history of the main population flows (migration, refugees and deportation) from and to Latvia in the twentieth century before describing the scale, main destinations and dynamics of emigration in the early twenty-first century, as well as its effect on the size and demographic potential of the population. It proceeds by analysing the four waves of recent emigration:

- (i) The pre-EU accession wave, 2000–2003;
- (ii) The post-accession wave, 2004–2008;
- (iii) The crisis-driven wave, 2009–2010 and
- (iv) The post-crisis wave, 2011–2016.

The economic and social contexts of these emigration waves will be considered and a conceptual framework and set of hypotheses about their nature will be offered, using the human capital theory, the new economic theory of migration and the network theory, and institutional factors will be emphasised. The chapter also analyses changes in ethnic composition and educational profile of the four waves of emigrants.

Issues such as labour market outcomes and the life satisfaction of emigrants and returnees will not be considered, nor will the economic impact of emigration (see Hazans 2013, 2015d, 2016a, c, 2017a, b, 2018).



### 3.2 Latvian Migration in the Twentieth Century<sup>3</sup>

In the nineteenth and early twentieth century Latvia was part of the Russian Empire. During the second part of the nineteenth century, after the end of indentured servitude and gradual lifting of other restrictions on human mobility, intensive rural-urban migration resulted in rapid urban growth. Riga's population almost quadrupled between 1863 and 1897. Growing cities attracted economic migrants from other parts of the Russian empire as well as from Germany and other European countries. At the same time, substantial numbers of Latvians moved outside Latvia's territory. By the end of the nineteenth century more than 10% of all ethnic Latvians were part of diaspora, including 112,000 in the Russian Empire (spread from provinces nearby Latvia to Siberia) and 35,000 living in the West.

'Migration systems' (see Bakewell 2014 and references therein) to and from Latvia kept working in the early part of the twentieth century. Russian, German and Jewish communities in Latvian cities and towns were strong and to some extent self-sufficient, and knowledge of Russian, German and other languages was widespread. These were important elements of inward migration systems which, in turn, strengthened these communities. By 1913, only one-third of Riga's residents were native born. Most of Riga's adult population spoke both Latvian and another language: 80% of men and two-thirds of women aged 20+, according to the 1925 census. Outside Riga this rate was lower, but it was still significant: above 50% among men and almost 30% among women.<sup>4</sup>

Apart from economic migrants, significant numbers of Jewish refugees from Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Poland entered Latvia (and other Baltic provinces) in the 1880s and early twentieth century. This was to escape the growing anti-Semitism and violent pogroms. Economic reasons also played a role in Jewish migration to Latvia, but these are difficult to quantify. Many of these Jewish immigrants moved on, to the United States and Palestine.

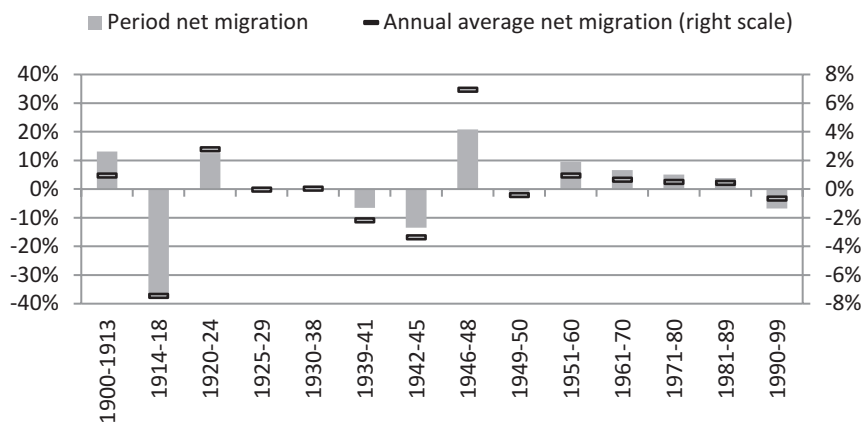
Important elements of the migration systems outwards were the numerous well-organised Latvian colonies, organisations and religious communities outside Latvia. There were also special preferential regime for new settlers in many Russian provinces, and by 1897, more than 70 colonies of Latvian farmers were established across the Russian Empire. Many Latvians settled in cities and found jobs as professionals, blue collar or service workers. Between 1897 and 1913, the number of Latvian schools outside the country more than trebled, increasing from 14 to 52, while the size of the Latvian diaspora increased to approximately 220,000, including 45,000 in the West (mostly in the United States). Following the 1905 Revolution about 5000 political refugees and 2652 deportees constituted a relatively small but important part of emigration from Latvia at the beginning of the twentieth century.

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<sup>3</sup>This section combines information compiled from various sources by Zelče (2011) and the National History Museum of Latvia (2016) with our own elaboration on data from the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia (2016a, b, c, 2017a, b, c) and OECD (2008, 2017).

<sup>4</sup>Calculations by the author based on data from the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia (2016c).





**Fig. 3.3** Net migration and net migration rate by sub-period of the twentieth century (% of the initial population). (Source: Data cited in Zelče (2011) and the National History Museum of Latvia (2016), Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia (2016a, b, 2017a, b), OECD (2017), and author's own calculation)

Despite intensive migration both to and from Latvia, the migration balance during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was significantly positive. During the period 1900–1913, the increase in Latvia's population due to net migration was 13% (nearly 1% per annum) of the initial population, or 264,000 persons<sup>5</sup> (see Fig. 3.3).

During World War I and the Russian civil war, around one million Latvia's residents moved to other territories (mostly in Russia) as refugees, displaced persons, evacuees or after being mobilised into armed forces. In 5 years Latvia lost 37% of its population (Fig. 3.3). Around half died outside Latvia, while others settled in Soviet Russia, Estonia, Lithuania and Germany. Less than one-third returned after the war. Many former Latvian soldiers, known as 'Red Riflemen' settled in Russia after the war, serving in the new Soviet government's security forces or as Bolshevik Party functionaries, while others resumed their lives as civilians in some of the Latvian colonies or in cities.

In 1918, the independent Latvian state was created. Over the next 10 years, around 300,000 people returned to Latvia, most of them in the period 1919–1921. Net migration during the 4.5 years between the 1920 and 1925 censuses was 200,000 people, or 13% of the country's population in 1920 (Fig. 3.3). Political refugees and deportees accounted for a small but not negligible part of these migration flows. More than 10,000 people moved to Soviet Russia or were expelled from Latvia for engaging in 'anti-state activities', while around 15,000 moved to Latvia fleeing the Soviet regime.

The period between 1925 and 1938 was characterised by the low intensity of migration. The annual average net migration rate was 0.04% in 1925–1929 and

<sup>5</sup> Ironically, 100 years later (in 2000–2014), Latvia lost the same number of people to migration.

0.02% in 1930–1938 (Fig. 3.3). Land reform largely eliminated the motivation among farmers to emigrate. The economic situation was perceived as good by the majority of the population. Self-employment accounted for more than 60% of total employment, while the unemployment rate was below 1%. Nevertheless, about 5000 people moved from Latvia to the US between 1920 and 1939, while 2700 moved to Brazil and 4500 to Palestine.

The largest Latvian diasporas in the 1920s and 1930s were found in Soviet Russia (151,400 according to the 1926 census), the US (38,000), Lithuania (30,000), Estonia (12,300) and Brazil (7000).

From a migration perspective, the decade between 1939 and 1949 can be described as an ‘era of displaced persons and refugees’ for Latvia (Zelče 2011, p. 62). In 1939–1940, 51,000 ethnic Germans left for Germany in a ‘repatriation’ programme launched by Hitler’s government. Another 10,500 Germans followed during the winter of 1941, after Latvia’s incorporation into the USSR. Overall, these two waves reduced Latvia’s population by 2.6%.

On 14 June 1941, 15,424 people (0.8% of Latvia’s population) were deported as ‘class enemies’ by the Soviet regime. Some were arrested and sent to camps in Northern parts of Russia. Administrative deportees were settled in Siberia, the Kazakh Republic and elsewhere. About 40% of the 1941 deportees died in camps or in exile. In June 1941 Germany invaded the USSR and Latvia was occupied by the Nazis, prompting around 53,000 people to leave Latvia for other regions of the USSR; some were evacuated while others found their way as refugees. Overall, in the period 1939–1941 Latvia lost about 6.6% of its population as repatriates, deportees and refugees (Fig. 3.3).

According to conservative estimates, another 242,000 people (13.4% of the population) were lost due to different types of forced migration in the period 1942–1945. This figure covers:

- (i) Those who were mobilised and sent outside Latvia in the ranks of the Nazi army or the Red/Soviet Army (excluding those who were killed during the war);
- (ii) Those who chose (or were forced) to work in Germany during the war;
- (iii) Refugees who left Latvia for Germany and other Western countries (Austria, Belgium, Denmark and Sweden) at the end of the war (or immediately after it) to avoid life under the Soviet regime.

The total also accounts for return migration from other parts of the Soviet Union which started in 1945 (estimated inflow in that year is 15,000 persons).

Most refugees, as well as members of the Latvian Legion who had served as soldiers in the German army, ended up in Displaced Persons camps, but in 1947 a programme began to close these camps, and refugees began to move to countries which were ready to receive them. This was the starting point of the post-war wave of the Latvian diaspora. About 45,000 went to the US; Australia and Canada received about 20,000 each; 17,000 ended up in the UK; 15,000 settled in Germany, 4000 in Sweden, 5000 in South America and 5000 elsewhere. One of the key elements facilitating the respective migration systems was the International Refugee Organisation

(IRO 1947–1951), succeeded by the UNHCR, as well as Latvian organisations existing previously in the host countries.

Latvia, re-occupied by the Soviet Union since 1945, experienced a mass return of refugees and military personnel between 1946 and 1948, as well as the inflow (partly centrally managed) of migrants from other parts of the Soviet Union. These factors increased Latvia's population by more than 323,000, or 21%, in just 3 years (Fig. 3.3).

Return migration and immigration continued in 1949–1950, but the migration balance in this period was negative (equalling a loss of almost 16,000 persons, or 0.8% of the population) due to the forced deportation of 42,125 people (2.2% of population) to Siberia or the Far East of the USSR on March 25, 1949. Later (mostly in 1956–1957, after the denunciation of Stalinist repression at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party), around 80% of those exiled in 1949 returned to Latvia (Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia 2017b).

Between 1951 and 1990, immigration into Latvia from other parts of the Soviet Union continued at high (although decreasing) rates: from 9.5% in 1951–1960 to 6.6% in 1961–1970; 5.1% in 1971–1980 and 3.8% in 1981–1989 (Fig. 3.3). As the result, the share of ethnic Latvians in Latvia's population fell from 77% in 1935 to 52% in 1989.

Key elements which kept this migration system going included:

1. Centralised decision making on the allocation of resources, including the labour force;
2. Mandatory prescription of their workplace for university graduates for a period of at least 3 years;
3. Russian language as the official language in all parts of the Soviet Union;
4. The standard of living being higher in Latvia (and other Baltic republics) than elsewhere in the Soviet Union (except Moscow and Leningrad).

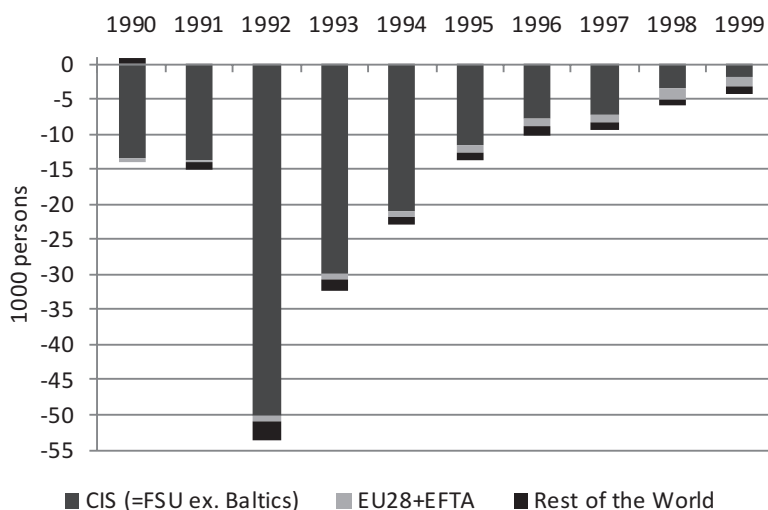
Emigration from Latvia under the Soviet regime was almost impossible. The exception (which became possible under international pressure) was the emigration of Jews: about 13,000 emigrated to Israel, Germany, the US and Canada between 1968 and 1980, and another 16,000 left in the subsequent 9 years up to 1989. Some Poles and Germans were also able to emigrate thanks to family reunification agreements.

In the last decade of the twentieth century, after the restoration of Latvia's independence in 1990, the country lost 6.7% of its population to migration in two parallel processes (Figs. 3.3 and 3.4).

First, especially in the first half of the decade, there was a vast outflow of the Russian-speaking population to Russia and, to a smaller extent, other CIS countries.<sup>6</sup> For some of these emigrants this was, in fact, forced family migration: significant numbers of Soviet Army staff had to leave Latvia, and their family members joined them. For many others, emigration was triggered by dramatic changes in a number of fundamental life domains – changes which affected their social and

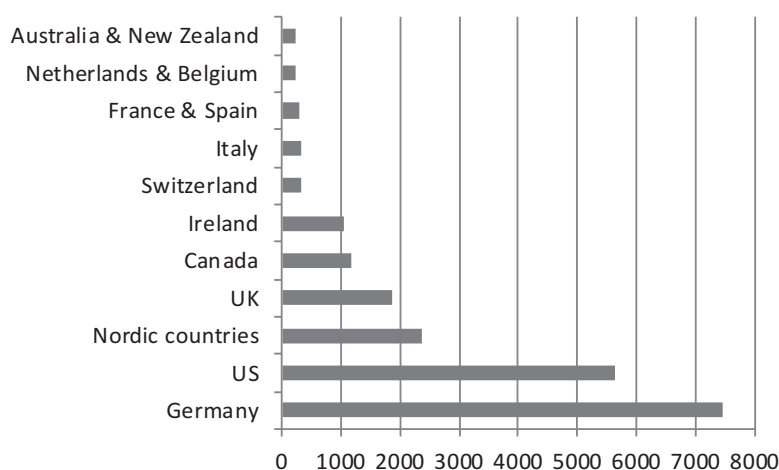
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<sup>6</sup>The CIS included the republics of the former Soviet Union except for the Baltics.



**Fig. 3.4** Latvia's net migration 1990–1999, by destination. (Source: Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia (2017c, d) and statistical offices of EFTA countries)

economic status, self-perception, relationships with others and perspectives on life. The political regime changed from being a global superpower, a multi-national Communist empire with the Russian language being both the *lingua franca* and the main official means of communication, to a neo-liberal national state previously occupied by that very superpower, where the official communication between all state and municipal institutions and the civil and business population was only in the Latvian language. The change of language substantially weakened the labour market position of those without good Latvian language skills (Hazans 2010, 2011a). In addition, many of the large manufacturing enterprises and research institutes closed down in the early 1990s. Some of them had previously been part of the Soviet military-industrial complex which had employed large numbers of the post-war immigrants and their descendants. Finally, citizenship of the new independent state was granted only to those who were citizens of the Latvian Republic between 1918 and 1940 and their descendants, while others were offered a choice between a Latvian 'non-citizen' passport or applying for Russian citizenship (see Muižnieks 2006). These 'push' factors, together with strong family, social and professional networks the post-war immigrants to Latvia had in Russia and other CIS countries, as well as their relatively easy access to Russian citizenship, contributed to the rise of the Latvia-CIS migration system in the 1990s. Transformation of all 15 Soviet republics into independent nation states also worked as a 'pull' factor, as ethnic Ukrainians, Uzbeks, Kazakhs, etc. living in Latvia in Soviet times considered moving back to their respective countries.



**Fig. 3.5** Post-Soviet emigrants from Latvia in OECD countries by the end of the twentieth century. (Source: OECD (2008, 2017) and author's own calculation. Note: UK data refer to 2001. Data for Germany refer to all nationals of Latvia residing in Germany by the end of 1999 and therefore might also include some Soviet-era emigrants)

Secondly, the fall of the Iron Curtain allowed for pioneer emigration (Bakewell et al. 2011) to the West. This was mostly economically motivated, but also included student migration, international family formation and so on. Both ethnic Latvians and Russian-speakers were found among these pioneers. Some of them relied on help and information support from the rich social infrastructure created in the Western countries by the post-war Latvian refugees (see Zelče 2011, pp. 64–66 and references therein) or from less formal social networks among Russian-speaking emigrants from the Soviet Union in Germany, the United States, Canada, Australia and elsewhere. Other pioneers were able to find their own way themselves or by using professional or business contacts in the West acquired while working in Latvia. In the early 1990s, the majority of emigrants to the West went to destinations outside Europe, but it was the other way around in the late 1990s (Fig. 3.4). By the end of the twentieth century, the post-Soviet Latvian diaspora in OECD countries accounted for about 21,000 people (see Fig. 3.5 for details).

Finally, there was some return migration in the 1990s of ethnic Latvians (both from the West and from the CIS countries) to Latvia after independence was restored.

During 1989–1999, the net migration of ethnic Latvians was positive at 1.8%, while the net migration of the minority population was negative at –16.8% (Table 3.1). The population share of ethnic Latvians increased from 52% in 1989 to 57.7% in 2000.

**Table 3.1** Net migration of Latvia's population by main ethnic groups, 1989–2016

	1989–1999	2000–2010	2011–2016	2000–2016
Total	–7.1%	–7.9%	–3.7%	–11.3%
Latvians	1.8%	–5.5%	–3.1%	–8.4%
Minorities	–16.8%	–11.2%	–4.7%	–15.4%
Russians	–18.0%	–11.8%	–4.8%	–16.0%
Ukrainians	–31.3%	–13.1%	–2.8%	–15.5%
Belarussians	–13.1%	–9.8%	–2.0%	–11.6%
Poles	...	–7.8%	–5.4%	–12.8%
Lithuanians	...	–7.7%	–4.1%	–11.5%

Source: Calculation based on the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia (2017e, f)

It is likely that data for 1989–1999 over-estimate the absolute net migration of Latvians and minorities because, during this period, Soviet passports were changed to Latvian ones, and many of those born in ethnically mixed families changed their ethnicity from Russian to Latvian, Polish, etc. Data for 2000–2016 rely on the 2011 Census data and therefore should be considered with a degree of care (see Hazans 2013, p. 68, p. 72, pp. 109–110). The data refer to the total migration rather than the migration of nationals

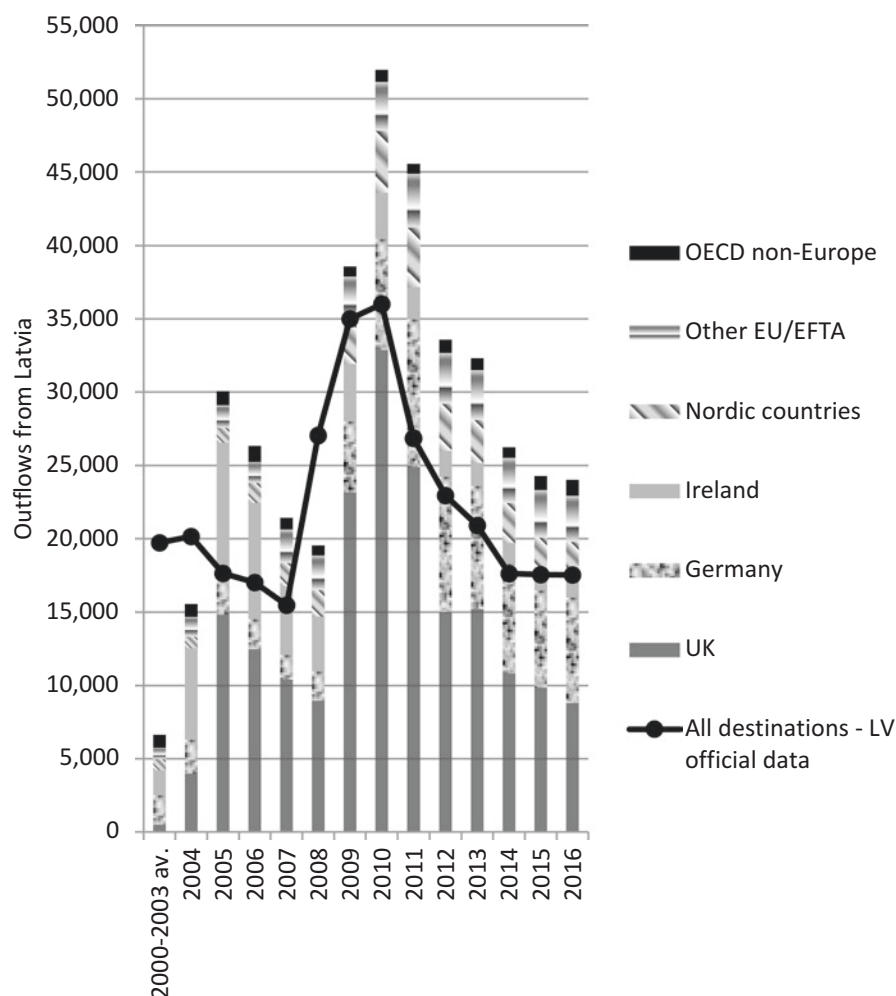
### 3.3 Emigration of Latvia's Nationals in the Early Twenty-First Century: The Context, Scale and Main Destinations

Emigration from Latvia in the early twenty-first century was to a large extent shaped by two milestones. First, EU accession in 2004 gave Latvian citizens immediate access to the labour markets of the UK, Ireland and Sweden (as well as of all the new member states), while the other EU-15 countries gradually opened their labour markets during 2006–2011. This new possibility attracted thousands of Latvians. However, the economic crisis in Latvia of 2008–2009 and its economic and social consequences sent even more Latvians abroad, including those who had never considered such a move before.

The driving forces of emigration in the early twenty-first century and the changing profile of emigrants are discussed in greater detail in Sects. 3.5 and 3.6. Here we focus on developments regarding the scale and main destinations of that emigration.

Figure 3.6 presents the outflows of Latvia's nationals (i.e. holders of Latvian passports: both citizens and non-citizens) to the main OECD destinations and compares the data from receiving countries with the official Latvian emigration statistics. Due to problems in the 2011 Census (see Hazans 2013, p. 68, p. 72, pp. 109–110 for details) the official data have been obtained by an indirect method and it appears that they strongly *over-estimate* outflows in 2000–2003 and 2008 but *under-estimate* emigration during the post-accession period 2005–2007, as well as during the post-crisis years 2010–2016.

Before Latvia's accession to the EU, emigration from Latvia occurred at rather low rates (about 0.25% of population per annum), but immediately after accession in 2004, the UK, Ireland and Sweden opened their labour markets for nationals of the new member states, and outflow from Latvia almost tripled. It increased further



**Fig. 3.6** Gross outflows of Latvian nationals to main OECD destinations, 2000–2016 (destination countries' data vs. official Latvian statistics). (Source: Eurostat and OECD (in some cases also national statistics) data on immigration of foreigners by nationality; Ireland and the UK data on allocation of social security numbers. Note: Due to data limitations, Latvian official data for 2000–2010 refer to total outflows (including foreigners))

in 2005, most likely due to the network effect, and after that never fell below 1% of the population per annum. The outflows reacted to economic developments in Latvia in a predictable way: the flow declined during growth periods (2005–2007 and 2011–2016) but increased explosively during the crisis, reaching 2.5% of the population in 2010.

There were also dramatic changes in the shares of different destinations in the total outflow (see Fig. 3.6) reflecting both institutional and economic developments. In 2004, Ireland was the destination of 40% of emigrants, followed by the UK with

26%; both countries sharply increased their shares compared to the pre-accession period due to the opening of their labour markets. In 2005 the UK almost doubled its share, while Ireland's share fell to 30% and further to about 20% in 2007–2008; meanwhile, the share of non-English speaking countries (many of which opened their labour markets in 2006–2007) increased. With the onset of the economic crisis which strongly hit Ireland's labour market, Ireland's share continued its decline and after 2011 never went above 5%.

Since 2005, the UK has kept the largest share of Latvian emigrants – almost half of them in 2005–2008 and more than 60% in 2009–2010. However, with the opening of the German labour market in 2011, the share going to the UK started to decline; it was just above 40% in 2014–2015 and dropped below that level in the Brexit referendum year, 2016. Uncertainty surrounding the post-Brexit status of labour migrants from Latvia and other new member states during the period after the Brexit referendum (see e.g. Lulle 2018, Lulle et al. 2018) has made the UK a less popular choice among emigrants from Latvia.

Outflow from Latvia to Germany was rather stable in absolute terms in 2000–2008, but its share went down from 30% in the pre-accession period to 8% in 2005–2007 and 10% in 2008. With the beginning of the crisis and especially since 2011, the outflow to Germany started to increase. Recently its share is about 30%. The shares of the other main destinations in the post-crisis period are also relatively stable: about 10% of emigrants go to the Nordic countries; slightly more go to other EU/EFTA countries, and less than 5% go to non-European OECD countries.

Further evidence on the dynamics of emigration during 2000–2016, this time in terms of net emigration, is presented in Table 3.2, which compares four periods covering 4 or 5 years each based mostly on the statistics of the receiving countries.

We find that the effective annual rate of net migration has doubled in the post-accession period compared to the pre-accession one, and more than doubled again during the crisis and first two post-crisis years (2009–2012) compared to the post-accession wave. During the latest post-crisis years (2013–2016) the rate was slightly higher than in the post-accession period.

**Table 3.2** Net emigration of Latvia's nationals, 2000–2016

	1000s	Percent of the population at the beginning of 2000	Effective annual rate of net emigration
2000–2003	33.5	1.4%	0.35%
2004–2008	75.9	3.2%	0.65%
2009–2012	125.0	5.3%	1.41%
2013–2016	56.9	2.4%	0.67%
2000–2016	291.4	12.2%	0.76%

Source: Eurostat, OECD, national statistical offices and author's own calculation

Net emigration is the difference between emigration and immigration (i.e., the opposite of net migration). The effective annual rate of net emigration is a constant emigration rate which, if applied every year, would result in the given net outflow during the period



### 3.4 Emigration and Demographic Potential

This section discusses the impact of emigration on Latvia's population structure and demographic potential. Like elsewhere in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe (see IMF 2016, p. 12), those who left have been younger than those who stayed. However, due to unusually high emigration rates, the shrinking of the young and middle aged cohorts in Latvia has been particularly pronounced (Table 3.3), thus accelerating population ageing and distorting the age structure.

In the 10 years between 2004 and 2014, the cohorts aged 15–19, 20–24 and 25–29 years in 2004 lost 21.7%, 17.9% and 14.4% respectively of their members to migration, while the overall loss of population due to migration during this period was just 9.4%.

Even when comparing adult working-age individuals only, the emigrant population appears to be much younger than the stayers (Fig. 3.7).

In addition to the falling size of the reproductive age cohorts, Latvia's demographic potential is undermined by the fact that – at least in the post-crisis period – families with children or planning to have a child are more likely to emigrate, as shown in Fig. 3.8. This figure is based on a representative household survey conducted in Riga in 2012.

In a more general setting, Hazans (2018, Table A5) using four waves (2013–2016) of representative surveys of Latvia's population, shows that among people aged 18–34, those having a child under 18 in the family (with other things being equal) are significantly more likely to move to work abroad in the near future. Among men, the same effect was also found at the end of the crisis period; namely late 2010 to early 2011 (see Hazans 2013, Table 4.8).

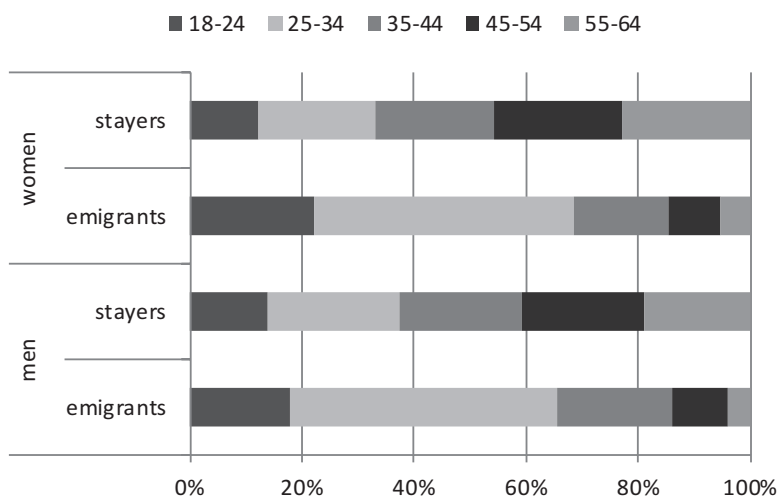
Figure 3.9 compares the proportion of emigrants living abroad with children aged below 18 – or having children this age in Latvia with the proportion of stayers living with children under 18 in Latvia. In both cases, the children of the emigrant or stayer and their partner's children are accounted for.

It appears that emigrants of both genders aged 18–24 are much more likely to have children than their counterparts in Latvia, while the reverse is true among those

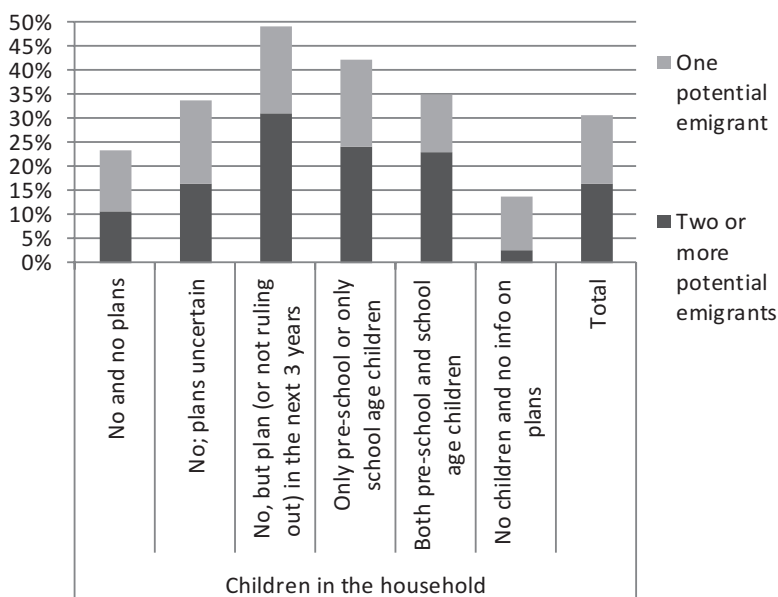
**Table 3.3** Net migration of Latvian nationals by selected age cohorts, 2004–2014

Age, 2004	2004–2009	2009–2014	2004–2014
Total	–3.2%	–6.4%	–9.4%
15–19	–7.9%	–15.0%	–21.7%
20–24	–8.1%	–10.6%	–17.9%
25–29	–5.4%	–9.5%	–14.4%
30–34	–4.6%	–6.6%	–10.9%
35–39	–4.2%	–5.7%	–9.7%

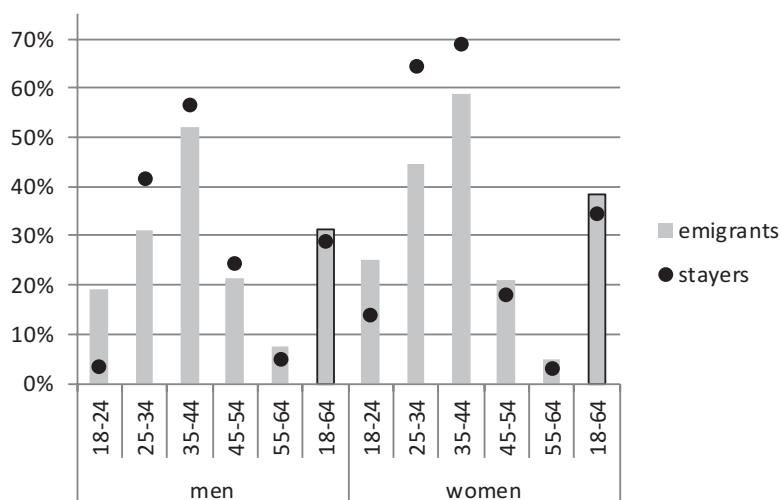
Net emigration by cohort has been calculated from the Latvian LFS microdata as the decrease in the annual average size of selected cohorts over two five year periods (2004–2009 and 2009–2014), less age-specific mortality over relevant periods. Total net migration is that over five-year periods 2004–2008 (see Table 3.2) and 2009–2013 (estimated by Table 3.2 method)



**Fig. 3.7** Age distribution of adult working-age emigrants from Latvia and stayers therein, 2014. (Source: Calculation with microdata of *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey and the Latvian Labour Force Survey 2014)



**Fig. 3.8** Share of households with one or more potential emigrants, by presence of children and plans to have children in the next 3 years. (Source: Hazans (2014, p. 10), based on a representative survey of households in 2007)



**Fig. 3.9** Incidence of having children aged below 18 among emigrants from Latvia and stayers therein, 2014, by age and gender. (Source: Calculation using microdata of *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey and the Latvian Labour Force Survey 2014. Note: For emigrants: the children were living in the same household abroad or were left behind in Latvia. For stayers: the children were living in the same household in Latvia. Emigrants'/stayers' own and their partner's children are included)

aged 25–44. In the age group 45–64, there is only small difference between emigrants and stayers. Overall, in 2014 about 30% of male emigrants aged 18–64 and about 40% of their female counterparts had adolescent children. Among stayers these proportions were slightly lower, mainly due to smaller shares of reproductive age cohorts (Fig. 3.9).

### 3.5 Four Waves of Emigration in the Early Twenty-First Century

The history of emigration from Latvia during 2000–2016 can be divided into four episodes:<sup>7</sup>

- (i) The pre-accession period, which we denote as 2000–2003;
- (ii) The post-accession period of economic growth, which we refer to as 2004–2008<sup>8</sup>;
- (iii) The crisis period: 2009–2010;
- (iv) The post-crisis period: 2011–2016.

<sup>7</sup>This section builds on the author's previous work (Hazans 2011b, 2012, 2013, 2016a).

<sup>8</sup>The crisis hit Latvia at the end of 2008, but its effect on emigration first appeared only in 2009.

During this relatively brief time, the main reasons for emigration, the rates of emigration and the most popular destinations for emigration – as well as the profile of the emigrants and their plans – have changed substantially several times.

### ***3.5.1 The Conceptual Framework***

Economic and sociological literature provides the conceptual framework for understanding migration patterns and the way these patterns change over time in response to economic, political and social developments in the source and destination countries. According to the (neoclassical) human capital model of migration (Borjas 1987, 1999; Sjaastad 1962), an individual decides to move if the expected utility in the destination country, net of the monetary, effort and psychological costs of migration, exceeds utility in the home country.

Apart from the earnings expected at home and abroad, this calculation should account for other factors affecting utility – job finding and job losing probabilities, the emigrant's legal status, career prospects, working and living conditions, the generosity of the social security system, social and cultural norms, perceived life prospects for children, etc.

The New Economics of Migration (Stark and Bloom 1985) emphasises that migration decisions are often taken by families, households or even larger groups, rather than individuals, and stresses the role of risk, both at home and abroad. Uncertainty has to be considered as the location-specific factor reducing utility; it also has to be taken into account from the perspective of the diversification of the family portfolio of human capital.

Furthermore, the New Economics of Migration points to the role of relative income in migration decisions as opposed to absolute income, and shows that falling income differentials may not discourage migration.

Migration systems theory (Bakewell 2014; de Haas 2010; Mabogunje 1970) and social network theory (Carrington et al. 1996) emphasise transnational links between people, families and communities which, along with other circumstances, support and sustain clustered migration flows.

### ***3.5.2 The Pre-accession Wave: Personal Characteristics***

Before joining the EU, unemployment in Latvia was at a two-digit level, while GDP per capita (at PPP) was well below 50% of the EU-15 average. The earnings of an unskilled worker in the UK, Nordic countries or Germany looked very attractive in comparison with average earnings in Latvia. These strong push and pull factors resulted in a sizeable emigration potential, which was larger among the Russian-speaking minority population (Hazans 2012, Fig. 6.2).

However, actual emigration rates in the early 2000s were low, due to the need for work and residence permits, but also because of high transportation and communication costs, the limited availability of good quality internet connections and the absence of convenient, extensive information sources regarding job opportunities and living and working conditions abroad. During the 4-year period before accession (2000–2003), the net outflow of Latvia's nationals was 1.4% of the initial population (Table 3.2).

To understand who were the likely movers in the pre-accession period, one should notice that migration costs were lower for people with professional or at least private contacts in potential destinations, with good foreign language and ICT skills, and the opportunity to use the internet for private purposes at a workplace. Clearly, all these attributes are found more often among university graduates. On the other hand, the absence of a favourable legal framework, restricted access to reliable information and difficulties in searching for jobs 'from overseas', coupled with a high risk of fraud by domestic firms recruiting workers for jobs abroad in the early 2000s, suggested that emigration required high degrees of initiative and the willingness to accept risk. However, a less risky, less initiative-led option was to access migration networks from previous waves of migration to the US, Canada, Australia, Sweden and Germany, as well as from and to Russia, Ukraine and Belarus.

Most emigrants – driven by their own initiative rather than their networks – were oriented towards relatively new directions, mainly the United Kingdom and Ireland, where the language barrier for them was lower than in the rest of the EU, while migration costs were lower than to other English-speaking countries. The pre-accession wave of emigration thus featured substantial positive selectivity regarding human capital and other personal characteristics, an over-representation of Russian speakers and a high degree of geographical diversification.

### ***3.5.3 The Post-accession Wave: Institutional and Market Factors***

During Latvia's first 5 years in the EU, i.e., before the effect on migration patterns became apparent of what is now called the 'Great Recession', migration flows were shaped mainly by institutional and market factors.

The gradual implementation of the free movement of labour within the EU (see Kahanec et al. 2016, Table 1) substantially lowered both the monetary and non-monetary costs of searching for a job abroad and the process of migration, as well as the human capital threshold (in terms of skills, initiative and risk-taking) for labour migration. Together with a high – and growing – demand for migrant labour in the EU15, this triggered a sharp and, to a large extent, persistent increase in emigration rates (see Table 3.2 and Fig. 3.6). This in turn lowered migration costs further via migrant networks and the rich social and media infrastructure existing within the rapidly growing Latvian diasporas in Ireland, the UK, Sweden, Germany

and elsewhere in the 'old' member states (see Hazans and Philips 2010; OECD 2012). Another significant factor was the drop in the price of international telecommunications and air travel due to growing markets and technological change.

In addition, strong pull factors were at work, such as higher incomes and better working conditions abroad, as well as factors relating to family and/or friends. Together, these factors covered about 80–90% of the potential emigrants from Latvia (Hazans 2012, Table 6.3).

On the other hand, due to strong economic growth in Latvia, the unemployment rate was falling while real income was rising (Hazans 2016a, Fig. 1), gradually reducing the expected gains from emigration. Thus, during the second part of the post-accession period, the motivation to move abroad driven by push factors was falling, and the motivation to return among recent emigrants was on the rise.

Overall, in the 5 years post-accession Latvia lost 3.2% of its population to emigration (Table 3.2).

In the migration-friendly post-accession environment, emigrants' self-selection in terms of human capital was driven mainly by their expected gains in terms of income and working conditions rather than the individual's comparative advantage in lowering migration costs. These gains were, on average, greater for people with secondary education or lower (see Hazans 2016a, p. 310 for details). Hence, one should expect that the post-accession emigrants from Latvia were less well educated as a group than pre-accession ones, either in an absolute (composition) or relative (selection) sense, or both.

The effect of ethnicity and citizenship on the propensity to emigrate has also changed. Due to strong economic growth and the labour shortage caused by emigration (Hazans and Philips 2010, Sect. 7 and Fig. 12), as well as a gradual improvement in state language skills among young and middle-age minorities (Hazans 2010, Fig. 3, 2011a, Tables 8.8–8.9), the labour market position of ethnic minorities in 2004–2007 was steadily improving (see Hazans 2016a, Fig. 6), thus weakening important push factors for this group. On the other hand, a substantial part of the minority population – those without Latvian citizenship – was not covered by the legal provisions for the free movement of labour within the EU. This worsened their mobility opportunities in comparison to citizens.

The above considerations suggest that, compared with the pre-accession period, post-accession emigrants from Latvia feature a significantly lower proportion of ethnic minorities, especially non-citizens.

Another important feature of this emigration wave is its mixed nature. While migration was to a large extent short-term and/or cyclical (see e.g. Hazans and Philips 2010, Sect. 6, Figs. 9 and 10), the Latvian diasporas abroad were steadily growing (Hazans 2015a, p. 11), suggesting that many emigrants have chosen to settle in destination countries.

### **3.5.4 *Crisis-Driven Emigration: Lost Jobs, Lost Perspectives, ‘the New Movers’, and the Shift Towards Permanent Emigration***

During the years of the Great Recession (2009–2010), significant economic push factors were at work; mainly joblessness and wage cuts, but also the implied inability to pay back credit.

The psychological shock was no less painful: a large proportion of people of working age, including those who managed to keep their jobs, lost confidence in the future (Hazans 2011b, 2013). Consumer confidence, satisfaction with the government and trust in the parliament dropped dramatically (Hazans 2015a, pp. 3–4; 2016a, Fig. 2).

Finding a Job in Western Europe was not as easy as before the crisis. The role of diasporas and informal networks increased as a consequence. Yet it was much easier than in Latvia. The rate of unemployment was very low in Norway, the Netherlands and Austria, and modest in the UK, Germany, Sweden and Denmark. The lifting of restrictions on the free movement of workers from EU8 countries by Belgium, Denmark and especially Norway from May 2009 further facilitated labour migration to these destinations.

Moreover, nominal earnings continued to rise across the old member states, while real earnings did not decline (European Commission 2011, graphs I.1.8, III. A3.5). Thus, the expected gains from emigration in terms of employment and earnings increased in comparison to the pre-crisis period.

In addition, as long-term joblessness was becoming more widespread in Latvia, the issue of social protection, which previously had been neglected by the middle class, gained importance as a factor driving migration decisions. A feature of Latvian social security was a very low income replacement rate for the long-term unemployed through unemployment benefit, even when social assistance and housing benefits are accounted for (European Commission 2011, graphs II.2.3– II.2.4).

Moreover, child benefits in Latvia were extremely low in comparison with those paid in the main destination countries of Latvian emigrants.

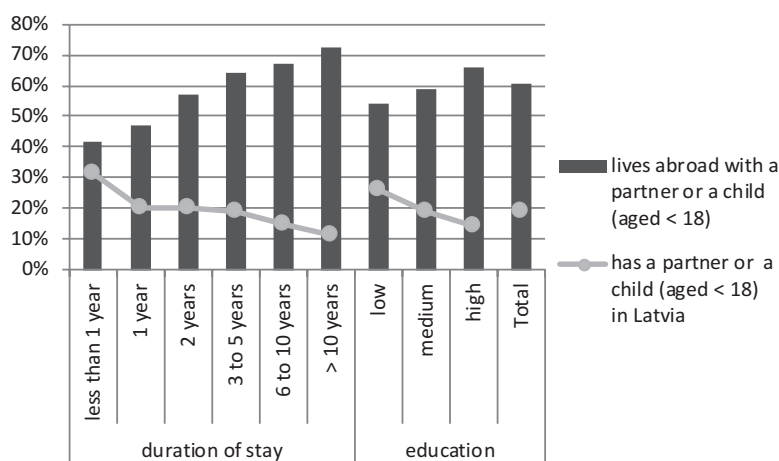
High and persistent unemployment, a weak social security system, lost perspectives – these were the factors that converged to make emigration a real option in the minds of many Latvians, even those who had not considered such a possibility before (Hazans 2011b, 2012, 2013; McCollum et al. 2017). There were two kinds of these ‘new movers’: (i) individuals who were inherently not very mobile for whom this was the only way out of financial difficulties; and (ii) people who were not satisfied with developments in Latvia and with their own prospects there, even if they were not experiencing economic hardship at that moment. In this way, the post-accession migration system was substantially transformed and expanded.

Unlike the pre-accession emigrants, most of those who left during and after the crisis were not risk-takers. On the contrary, they perceived staying as too risky, and the destination countries were seen as a safe haven. This implied *a strong shift from the temporary emigration of ‘breadwinners’ towards the long-term or permanent emigration of entire families*. The post-crisis emigrants, as opposed to the pre-crisis group, are much more oriented towards long-term or permanent emigration, are interested in legal employment and social security and are more likely to move as entire families (Hazans 2013, Table 4.6). According to *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey, by 2014 about 70% of emigrants had lived in their host countries for three or more years (Hazans 2018, Fig. 4).

The longer emigrants live in a host country and the higher their education level, the smaller the proportion is of them with a spouse, partner or adolescent child left in Latvia, and the larger the proportion that is living with a partner and/or a child or children aged under 18 abroad (Fig. 3.10).

Econometric analysis of the return intentions of emigrants (Hazans 2015b, c) shows that having family members remaining in Latvia positively affected the probability of their return. Conversely, having their family living with them abroad negatively affected the probability of the emigrant’s return – i.e., made them more likely to stay abroad.

By 2014, two-thirds of high-educated emigrants lived abroad with either a partner or a child aged under 18 (or both), and only 15% had a partner or a child left in Latvia. For medium-skilled emigrants these proportions were, respectively, 59% living abroad with either a partner or a child aged under 18 or both), and only 19% with a partner or a child left in Latvia, while for the low-educated the figures were 54% with a partner or child living with them and 26% with close family remaining in Latvia (Fig. 3.10).



**Fig. 3.10** Post-2000 emigrants’ partners and children in Latvia and abroad, by duration of stay in the host country and completed education level, 2014. (Source: Calculation with *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey data)



How and why did the crisis change the profile of emigrants? The crisis increased joblessness particularly among those without higher education and even more among those without secondary education (Hazans 2012, Fig. 6.3, 2013, Table 4.5). On the other hand, the relative labour market position of *ethnic minorities* (especially non-citizens) deteriorated during the crisis (Hazans 2010, Fig. 9, 2013, Table 4.5; 2016a, Fig. 6). At the same time, the state language proficiency requirements in the private sector were tightened and became almost universal in terms of the occupations covered (Hazans 2010, p. 151, 2011a, p. 187). Finally, while Latvian non-citizens and residents with citizenship of Russia and other CIS countries were still not covered by the free mobility provisions, the share of this category among the working-age minority population declined – not least because during the post-accession period many had passed the exams and received Latvian citizenship in order to become eligible for the free mobility provisions. Hence, based on domestic economic factors alone, one should expect a significant increase in the proportions of the low-skilled and Russian-speakers among the crisis-period emigrants<sup>9</sup>.

While economic considerations do not suggest that the crisis should intensify the brain drain, such a hypothesis emerges from the dominant perception in Latvia of the crisis as systemic. This is because people who have invested in higher education are usually future-oriented and more concerned with lost perspective and disappointment in the quality of governance. The latter point is in line with the IMF (2016: Fig. 5) finding that in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the quality of institutions has a stronger impact on the emigration of skilled workers than unskilled workers. Indeed, in early 2011, more than half the highly-educated potential emigrants reported *only non-economic reasons* for their plans to leave the country, while among the lower and medium-educated this proportion was below one-quarter and one-third (Hazans 2013, Fig. 4.13).

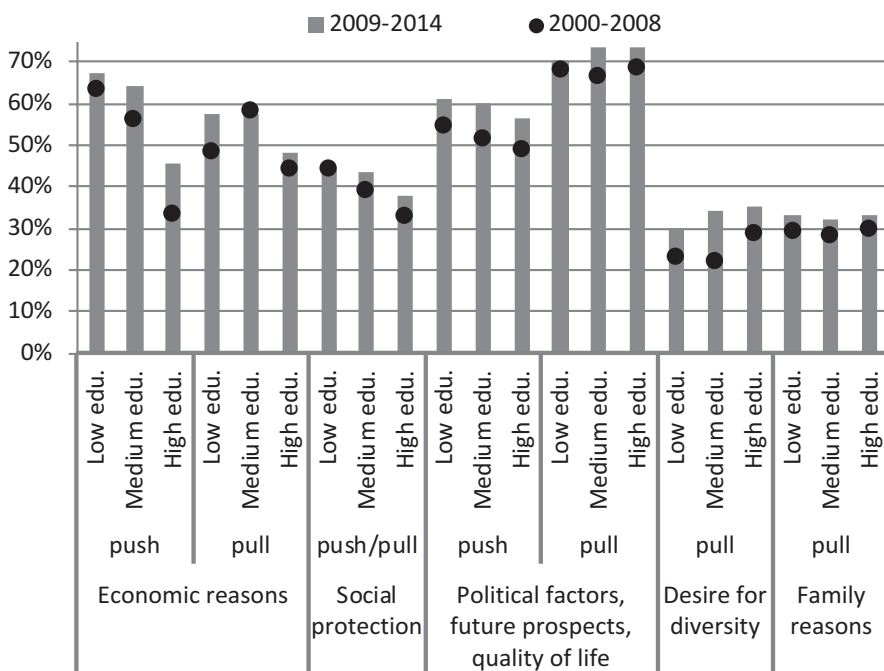
Evidence from *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey conducted in 2014 confirms that during the crisis the importance of both economic and non-economic push factors, better social security abroad, as well as family-related factors sharply increased compared to the pre-crisis period (Hazans 2016a, Fig. 7)<sup>10</sup>. Moreover, family reasons apart, these changes were more pronounced among the high-educated and also persisted after the crisis (Fig. 3.11).

Figure 3.12 highlights three important messages. First, net emigration outflow from Latvia during the six crisis and post-crisis years (2009–2014) was much larger than during the nine pre-crisis years (2000–2008). Secondly, the largest increase in the number of emigrants is found among the highly-educated. Thirdly, the increase in the number of highly-educated emigrants was driven mainly by those who were *not motivated by economic push factors*. This provides empirical support to the hypothesis that the crisis intensified brain drain from Latvia and boosted the importance of non-economic reasons for emigration.

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<sup>9</sup>See Hughes (2005) and Ivlevs (2013) for some theoretical considerations, and Hazans (2013, Table 4.8, 2016b) for empirical evidence on intentions.

<sup>10</sup>McCollum et al. (2017) present similar findings (apart from family reasons) based on another, smaller survey.

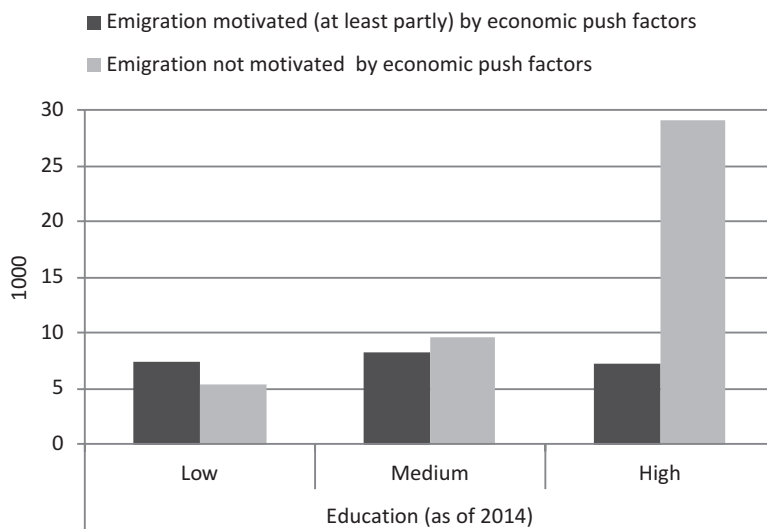


**Fig. 3.11** Motivation for emigration, by education level and period of emigration. (Source: Calculation with *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey data (Hazans 2018, Fig. 8). Note: Respondents could choose all relevant reasons from 17 given (the median number of reasons is 4 for the high-educated and 5 for others). See OECD (2016, Fig. 2.7) for a detailed list of reasons in each group)

Note that data in Fig. 3.12 also account for higher education completed after emigration; i.e. measuring the total brain drain rather than ‘diploma’ drain (see Hazans 2016a), but the results are qualitatively similar when the education level completed in Latvia is used.

### 3.5.5 *The Post-crisis Wave (2011–2016): Emigration as ‘the New Normal’*

In the first 3 years after the Great Recession, despite an economic recovery, there have been no clear signs of a considerable slowdown in emigration from Latvia – it has remained well above the pre-crisis level (Table 3.2; Fig. 3.6). In 2014–2016, emigration outflows fell by roughly one-quarter but were still above the level of the last pre-crisis years 2007–2008 (Fig. 3.6).

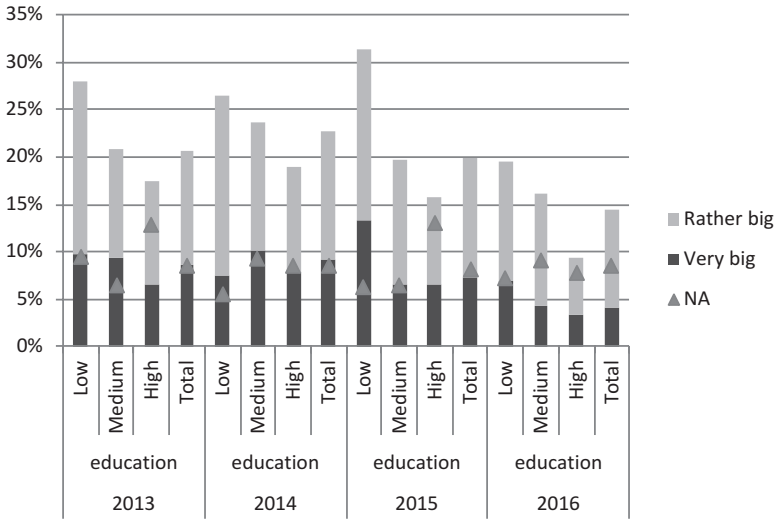


**Fig. 3.12** Increase in the number of settled emigrants from Latvia between 2000 and 2008 and 2009–2014, by education level in 2014 and the presence of economic push factors as reasons for emigration. (Source: Hazans (2018, Fig. A6). Note: Economic push factors include financial difficulties, the inability to make ends meet and inability to find a job in Latvia. The results are qualitatively similar when the education level completed in Latvia is used)

By 2011, 82% of Latvia's population aged 18–65 had some relative or friend with foreign work experience (Hazans 2011b, Box 2.25), while a recent survey put that figure at 91% among those aged 18–74 (LETA 2017). This suggests that work abroad has become an integral part of the Latvian national identity (Hazans 2013), and in the post-crisis period, emigration is 'the new normal' (Hazans 2016a). Powerful migration networks significantly reduce information and job search costs, as well as psychic and adaptation costs for potential emigrants, which explains the persistently high emigration potential. According to surveys, this was more than 20% of the population aged 18–64 in 2013–2015, but dropped to 15% in 2016 (Fig. 3.13). Migration flows are shaped by migrant networks, along with already-formed but not yet implemented intentions for emigration.

Paradoxically, growing vacancy rates and falling unemployment in Latvia (Hazans 2018) might contribute to these emigration intentions by reducing the risk for potential emigrants in case emigration appears to be working out unsuccessfully or their return is triggered by family reasons.

Pull factors have gained in importance among the drivers of emigration and while economic reasons for emigration remain widespread, non-economic ones are becoming increasingly important (Fig. 3.11; Hazans 2016a, Fig. 7; OECD 2016, Fig. 2.5). In terms of destinations, Germany, which opened its labour market for EU-10 workers in 2011, increased its share in outflows from Latvia (Fig. 3.6). This has had an impact on the composition of these migration flows, as Germany is more attractive than, say, the UK, for middle-aged skilled manual workers.



**Fig. 3.13** Emigration intentions in Latvia, 2013–2016 (population aged 18–64), by completed education level. The survey question was: ‘How big is the probability that in the near future you might move to work abroad?’ (Source: Calculations with representative population survey data conducted by SKDS)

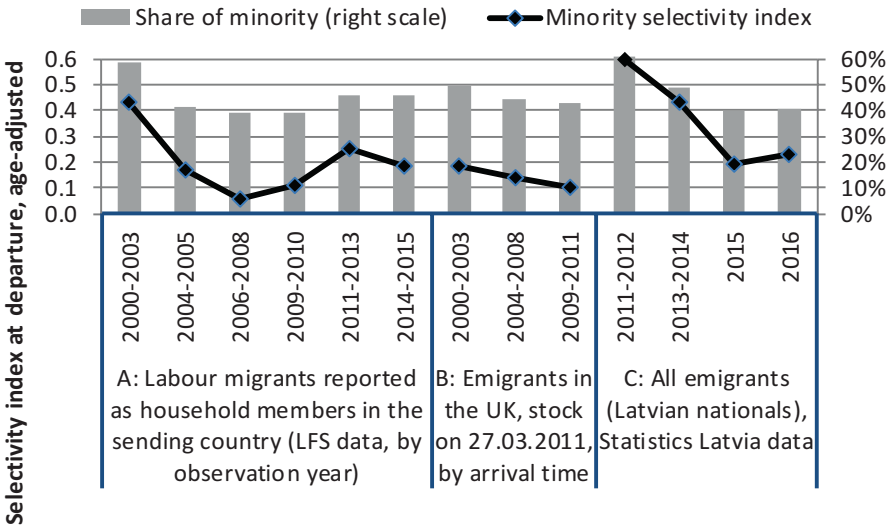
## 3.6 The Evolution in Composition of the Four Waves of Emigrants

### 3.6.1 Ethnicity

Figure 3.14 presents empirical evidence on the ethnic composition of the four recent waves of emigrants.<sup>11</sup> As seen in Panel A, the share of minorities among the individuals working abroad but still considered household members at home is U-shaped, reaching its lowest point in 2006–2008, when the ethnic gaps in employment and unemployment were at their lowest values (Hazans 2016a, Fig. 6), and increasing during the crisis, when the relative labour market position of ethnic minorities deteriorated. The corresponding selectivity index<sup>12</sup> (which accounts for the fact that the minority share in Latvia’s population was declining over time and is smaller among the youth and the middle-agers than among the elderly) follows the same pattern, in line with expectations stated in Sects. 3.5.3 and 3.5.4.

<sup>11</sup> This section builds on the author’s previous work (Hazans 2016a, 2018). On Russian-speaking emigrants from Latvia, see also Ivlevs (2013), Lulle and Jurkane-Hobein (2016).

<sup>12</sup> The selectivity index  $SI = \ln(P_M/P_S)$ , where  $P_M$  and  $P_S$  are shares of minorities (or any other group of interest) among movers and stayers. The  $SI$  is positive if minorities are over-represented among movers (Hazans 2011b, 2016a).



**Fig. 3.14** Ethnic composition and selectivity of emigrants from Latvia, 2000–2016. (Source: Calculation with data of Latvian LFS, UK Population Census 2011 (ONS Tables CT0255, CT0333), and Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia (2017g). Note: In Panel B, the data cover only England and Wales. In panel C, data for years before 2011 are not available)

Russian speakers were over-represented among mobile workers still attached to their Latvian households in the whole period between 2000 and 2015, as indicated by the positive values of the selectivity index.

Panel B of Fig. 3.14 is based on the data of the UK Population Census 2011 and refers to Latvia-born residents of England and Wales who arrived in the UK in the period 2000–2011 (before the Census). For 2005–2011, these data (free from the restriction that the emigrants are still considered household members in Latvia) also suggest that the proportion of non-Latvians among emigrants is slightly above 40% (i.e. higher than among stayers) and supports our expectation that the proportion of ethnic minorities among post-accession emigrants was smaller than before. Panel B does not feature an increase in the minority selectivity index caused by the crisis; this might have to do with the nature of the Census data (recent crisis-driven migrants, especially the low-skilled, were less likely to take part in the Census).

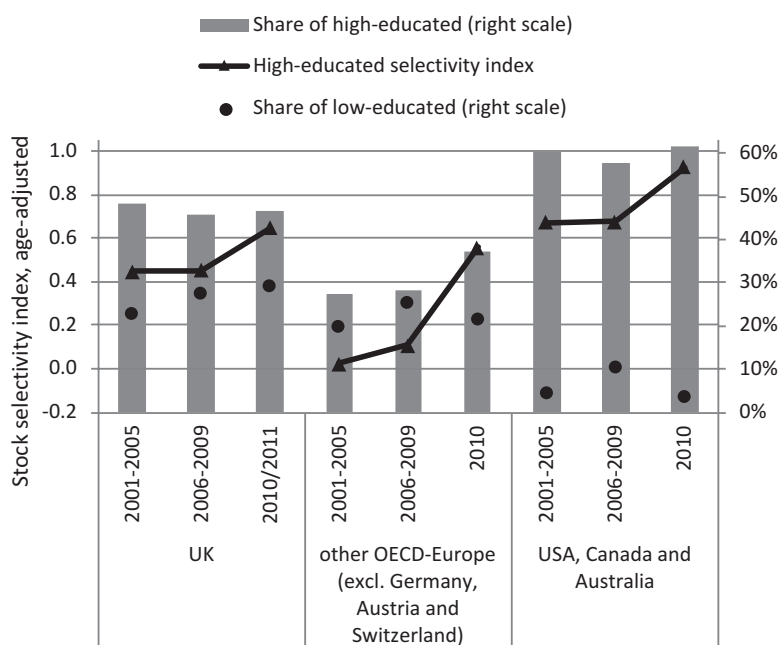
Finally, Panel C covers only the post-crisis period and indicates that minorities were substantially over-represented among emigrants. This is in line with changes in language policy and the labour market position of minorities, as described in Sect. 3.5.4, as well as with intention-based evidence in Hazans (2013, Table 4.8, 2016b, pp. 8–10).

### 3.6.2 Education Level

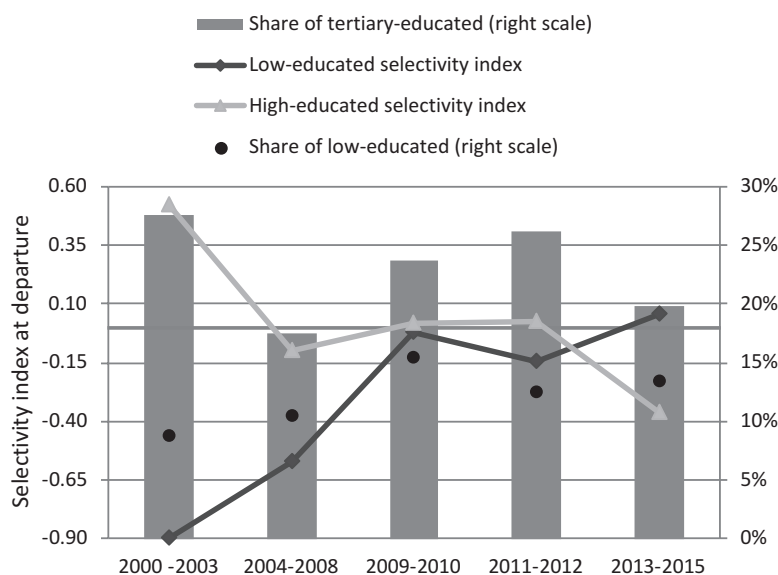
By early 2011, emigrants from Latvia who had lived in OECD countries for up to 10 years featured larger shares of the tertiary-educated than their age peers in Latvia, and this was especially pronounced among early post-crisis emigrants (Fig. 3.15). On the other hand, the low-educated were also somewhat over-represented among Latvian emigrants in European OECD countries. Emigrants in the main non-European destinations appear to be much better educated; a finding consistent with the idea that a migration-friendly institutional environment in the EU lowers the human capital threshold for potential migrants.

Latvian mobile workers still considered household members back home appear to be less well-educated than settled emigrants, suggesting that highly-skilled emigrants are more likely to stay in their destination countries for prolonged periods or permanently. This finding emerges from a comparison of LFS-based data (Fig. 3.16) with the Census-based data in Fig. 3.15.

The selectivity indices in Fig. 3.16 compare mobile workers with Latvia's population aged 18–64 in the same period, thus measuring the effect on the working-age population.



**Fig. 3.15** Skill composition and selectivity of twenty-first century emigrants from Latvia. OECD countries, early 2011. (Sources: Calculation with data of OECD 2014 and Eurostat data Hazans 2018, Fig. 9)



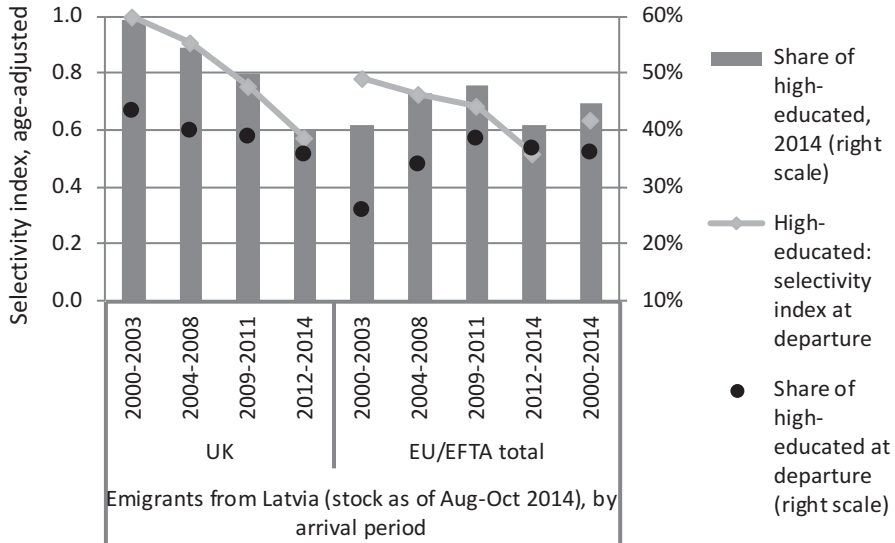
**Fig. 3.16** Skill composition and selectivity of Latvian mobile workers reported as household members back home, 2000–2015. (Source: Calculations with the Latvian LFS data (builds on Hazans 2018, Fig. 10). Notes: The selectivity indexes compare mobile workers with Latvia’s population aged 18–64 in the same period)

University graduates were over-represented among pre-accession mobile workers. In line with the expectations outlined in Sect. 3.5.3, the share of the high-educated and the corresponding selectivity index drop in the post-accession period. The share and selectivity of the low-skilled increases – reflecting the effect of free mobility provisions which lowered the human capital threshold for moving – while there are also higher expected gains for the lower and medium-skilled).

During and after the crisis, the share and selectivity index of the high-educated among the mobile workers was above pre-crisis levels (consistent with findings from Fig. 3.15 for settled emigrants and in line with expectations in Sect. 3.5.4), but fell again in 2013–2015. The latter observation should be considered with care, because it might indicate either smaller outflows of the high-educated or a switch to full-family emigration (which is not observed in LFS data). The share (and selectivity index, not shown in Fig. 3.15) of the low-educated stayed above pre-crisis levels throughout 2009–2015, reflecting the fact that the low-skilled suffered more and for longer from recession-related joblessness.<sup>13</sup>

Data from *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey confirm a substantial university diploma drain from Latvia to various EU/EFTA destinations during the whole period between 2000 and 2014 (Fig. 3.17). This increases over time, except

<sup>13</sup> McCollum et al. (2017) also find a higher share of the lower-skilled among post-crisis emigrants.



**Fig. 3.17** Shares and selectivity of the high-educated among adult emigrants from Latvia, 2000–2014, by destination and arrival period. (Source: Calculation with *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey data and Eurostat data (builds on Hazans 2018, Fig. 7). Note: The selectivity index at departure compares, for each destination and arrival period, the share of emigrants who left Latvia aged 15+ with a completed tertiary education with the share of tertiary-educated stayers in that period, assuming the same age distribution as for those who moved from Latvia during that period)

for the most recent period. The shares of the high-educated among emigrants were well above those found in respective periods among stayers of the same age as emigrants, as indicated by the positive values of the age-adjusted selectivity index at departure (ranging between 0.51 and 0.78 for the total outflow to EU/EFTA).

Figure 3.17 also illustrates how the share of the tertiary-educated among emigrants further increased during their stay in the host countries, reaching, by 2014, 45% (on average across destinations and arrival periods).

Latvia's accession to the EU in 2004 has boosted the diploma drain in absolute terms, but in relative terms it became less intensive than before, as suggested by the falling selectivity index (Fig. 3.17). Moreover, for the UK, which was the main destination after accession, the share of the high-educated among post-accession emigrants surveyed in 2014 is lower than among their pre-accession counterparts. This is consistent with theoretical expectations (see Sect. 3.5.3) based on institutional and market factors: the free movement of labour lowered both migration costs and the human capital threshold.

Evidence from *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey (shares of university graduates at departure found in Fig. 3.17, as well as the stock selectivity index presented in (Hazans 2018:Fig. 7) suggests that during the crisis, the diploma drain and brain drain from Latvia was more intensive than before, reflecting a rise in general



disappointment and non-economic reasons for emigration among the high-educated and the future-oriented (see Hazans 2011b, 2012, 2013, 2016a, as well as Fig. 3.11 above). This trend also continued after the crisis, except for the UK.

### 3.7 Conclusion

This chapter presents a brief history of migration to and from Latvia and the evolution of its driving forces in the early twenty-first century. The empirical findings from a number of independent data sources are in line with expectations based on a theoretical analysis of the economic, social and institutional context of four emigration waves and the underlying migration systems.

In the twentieth century, Latvia experienced two world wars and three occupations. Thousands of economic migrants, refugees and displaced people moved from Latvia in some periods and to Latvia in others. Net annual migration rates featured large swings from  $-7.5\%$  to  $-2.9\%$  during the two world wars to  $2.8\%$  and  $6.9\%$  in the post-war periods.

Migration to Latvia from other parts of the Soviet Union continued at high (although decreasing) rates until 1989. Key elements which kept this migration system going included: (i) centralised decision-making on the allocation of resources, including the labour force; (ii) the Russian language as the Soviet Union's *lingua franca* (iii) a higher standard of living in Latvia than almost elsewhere in the Soviet Union. As the result, by 1989 the share of ethnic Latvians in Latvia's population fell to just above one-half.

However, the last decade of the twentieth century has seen a massive outflow of the Russian-speaking population from restored independent Latvia to Russia and other CIS countries. On the Latvian side, the rise of this migration system was triggered by dramatic changes in political regime, prevailing historical narrative, language environment, structure of labour demand, and, for many, loss of citizenship. Key elements for the post-war immigrants to Latvia included strong family, social and professional networks in Russia and other CIS countries, as well as relatively easy access to citizenship there.

By 2000, due to outflow of the Russian-speakers and – though much smaller in scale – the return of ethnic Latvians from the West and Russia, the population share of ethnic Latvians had reached almost 58%.

The 1990s also saw pioneer emigration to the West. The migration system emerging at this time was a hybrid one, relying either on support from the rich social infrastructure created in the West by the post-war Latvian refugees or from less formal social networks among Russian-speaking emigrants from the Soviet Union. A third factor was the ability of the pioneers to find their way themselves. By the end of the twentieth century, the post-Soviet Latvian diaspora in OECD countries accounted for around 21,000 people, implying net migration of less than 1% of the population in 10 years.

The pre-accession emigration wave (2000–2003) featured substantial positive selectivity on human capital and other personal characteristics, an over-representation of Russian-speakers and a high degree of geographical diversification. During this wave, the net outflow of Latvian nationals was 1.4% of the initial population.

The post-accession wave (2004–2008) was shaped by:

- The gradual implementation of the free movement of labour within the EU;
- The high and growing demand for migrant labour in the EU15;
- Advances in information and communication technologies;
- Falling prices for international telecommunication and air travel and
- The availability of free information via EURES consultants and the European Mobility Portal.

All these factors substantially lowered the monetary and non-monetary costs of labour migration and the human capital threshold, as well as the related uncertainty, such as the risk of failed migration. This triggered a sharp and – to a large extent – persistent increase in emigration rates, which further lowered migration costs via the expanding migrant networks.

Post-accession emigration was mainly driven by pull factors, while the role of push factors declined during the period especially for ethnic minorities, due to strong economic growth and developing labour shortages in Latvia. On the other hand, a substantial part of the minority population – i.e., those without Latvian citizenship – was not covered by the free movement of labour within the EU.

Summing up, it can be seen that in comparison with the pre-accession period, the post-accession emigrants from Latvia were, as a group, less well-educated and featured a significantly lower proportion of ethnic minorities, especially non-citizens. The post-accession migration was, to a large extent, short-term and/or cyclical, yet many emigrants have chosen to settle in their destination countries, and the Latvian diaspora abroad grew steadily. The net outflow of nationals from Latvia in the five post-accession years accounts for 3.2% of its population at the beginning of 2000.

During the years of the Great Recession (2009–2010), both economic and non-economic push factors gained importance among the reasons for emigration. Factors such as high and persistent unemployment, a weak social security system and lost perspectives converged to make emigration a real option in the minds of Latvia's residents, even for those who had not considered it before. The expected economic gains from emigration also increased in comparison to the pre-crisis period.

The post-accession migration system has been substantially transformed and expanded. The crisis triggered a strong shift from the temporary emigration of breadwinners towards the long-term or permanent emigration of entire families. Both gross and net emigration rates have increased sharply. The annual rate of net migration during the crisis and the first two post-crisis years (2009–2012) was more than twice as high as during the post-accession wave. The net outflow of Latvia's nationals in 2009–2012 accounts for 5.3% of country's population at the beginning of 2000.

The crisis has led to the deterioration of relative labour market positions of the low-educated and of the Russian-speakers; as a result, the proportions of these

groups among the emigrants has increased significantly. On the other hand, the crisis intensified the ‘brain drain’ from Latvia and boosted the importance of non-economic reasons for emigration, especially among the high-educated.

In the post-crisis years, despite economic growth in Latvia, working abroad has become an integral part of the Latvian national identity. Emigration, actual or planned, is ‘the new normal’. While the economic reasons for emigration remain widespread, non-economic ones have become increasingly important. Migration flows are shaped by migrant networks, along with already-formed but not yet implemented emigration intentions. Minorities and university graduates remain over-represented among emigrants. Emigration potential is persistently high, and only a small percentage of the emigrants return or plan to return (Hazans 2015b, p.10, 2015d, 2016a, p.335). Moreover, one in four returnees plans to move abroad again (Hazans 2016c, Table 3, 2017b, p. 40).

In conclusion, despite the passing of the economic crisis in Latvia, the impact of the normalising of emigration has profound consequences for the future. The brain drain of university graduates continues and few of the emigrants have plans to come back. What is even more worrying is that of those emigrants who have returned to Latvia after the crisis, one in four is planning to leave to work abroad again.

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# Chapter 4

## The Complex Identities of Latvians Abroad: What Shapes a Migrant's Sense of Belonging?



Ilze Koroļeva

### 4.1 Introduction

The relationships between identity and various kinds of attitudes and behaviour are without doubt one of the central themes in the social sciences. Identity researchers emphasise the dynamic nature of identity and its formation, and its variability over lifetimes. From this perspective, identity formation among migrants has emerged as a particularly interesting topic to study among sociologists, anthropologists, political scientists and the like. The global processes that accompany the movement of people and the developing technological possibilities allow information to be acquired from all over the world within seconds. It is possible to move to another country within a few hours, speak a different language and live in a completely different cultural environment. This often requires decisions about who to feel close to, what is common between 'us' and 'them' and the drawing of a defining border between 'our people' and 'the others'.

Since the restoration of Latvia's independence, identity research has become one of the central topics in social sciences research in the country (Hazans 2011; Ķešāne 2011; Zepa and Kļave 2011). Considering the growth of emigration flows, special attention has been paid to the theoretical and empirical analysis of the sense of belonging and identity in the Latvian diaspora (Bela 2014; Ķešāne 2011; Lulle 2011 and others). A characteristic that unites studies conducted on this topic is that all of them are based on qualitative interviews or case studies. Thus, this research has a limitation in terms of capturing the diversity of the global Latvian diaspora. This chapter aims to address this gap in the research by drawing on *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey data which includes information from 14,068 Latvian migrants in 118 countries. By using this data, this chapter aims to reveal and describe the complex nature of the sense of geographic and social

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belonging among Latvian emigrants, and to explore the factors affecting their identity maintenance and transformation processes.

## 4.2 Theoretical Framework

The concept of belonging is used to explore relationships between the self and society for several reasons: it is oriented towards the individual, used in daily lives that are saturated with formal and informal relations, and allows the establishment of a perspective on complex relations between the self and society while capturing changes (May 2011). Research into belonging helps uncover identification processes; not so much identity itself, rather the result of it. Both these aspects are closely related and are hardly separable in daily thinking. Bisley (2007) extends the notion of identity to those of being and belonging; to the ways in which individuals make up an image of themselves. In his view, the process of identity formation involves individual cognitive mechanisms as well as political and economic forces that promote certain ideas about existence and belonging.

In diaspora research the concepts of identity and belonging acquire new contexts and meaning. As with concepts of nationalism and globalisation, belonging and migration initially seem to contain a contradiction. Operationalisation of the concept of belonging within the context of national identity and territory leads us to such concepts as 'rootedness', 'state of peace', 'balance' and 'traditionalism', while 'migration' is related to mobility and postmodernity, and the conditionality and uncertainty of borders that comes with globalisation. Nowadays, both belonging and migration have acquired a new meaning that calls for a new conceptual approach (Hedetoft 2004). During the past decades, these approaches have changed and shifted the focus towards action, individual activities and the meaning of choice. In the context of migration, it means that migrants actively choose and shape their identities. Identities are seen as life projects, while recognising that such processes never end. Moreover, belonging is not something that a person commits to just once and keeps forever. The world we live in is constantly changing, as are the people living in and adapting to that world, and 'belonging' is achieved through an active process: in other words, belonging can be imagined as a trajectory in time and space (De Certeau 1984).

Identities develop within a social context and are shaped by culture, time and place obstacles. They can overlap or conflict (Tajfel 1981; Roccas and Brewer 2002). In the case of migrant identities, Mieriņa and Koroļeva (2015) find that the correlation between the sense of belonging to Latvia and the new host country is extremely small ( $-0.06$ ), which means that there is no conflict between these identities: they can co-exist.

Vanessa May (2011) points out that the concept of belonging is used to research relationships between the self and the society for several reasons. First, it is directed towards the person. Second, it is used in daily life when formal and informal relationships intertwine. Third, it allows for a complex view of the relationship between



self and society. Finally, the dynamics of such relationships allow the capturing of social change (May 2011, p. 364). In *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey, the identity characteristics of Latvians living abroad were based mainly on measurements of the strength of belonging to various social groups, communities, places and particular territories.

The strength of a 'sense of belonging' can vary. It can be weak or strong, firm or fragile, and this makes it possible to use quantitative measurements of its intensity. Due to these aspects, the belonging approach is widely used in sociological research and is applied to this project as well. Hedetoft (2004) points out four aspects of the belonging analysis that determine identity in several ways.

These aspects are: the source of belonging; the sense of belonging (shaped by socio-psychological necessities, identification with place and memories); the construction and institutionalisation of belonging; and the variability of belonging. All these intertwine in the process of forming a sense of identity.

The sense of belonging is never immediate or truly 'pure'. It always passes a mental process through personal and collective experience, over time and through psychological 'memory filters', each of which shapes individual images and perceptions of belonging and gives them depth and value. In this way new forms of belonging in emigration take shape: through interaction between memories, experience, future plans and opportunities (Hedetoft 2004). Life in Latvia as well as in emigration can be seen as a source for the formation of belonging.

The sense of belonging to social groups, communities and places – whether one's own or experienced in migration – is an *a priori* individual subjective feeling. Therefore, it is affected by a range of psychological or subjective features which can influence the intensity of different levels of 'belonging'.

The circumstances under which a migrant leaves their home country can impact on the affective feelings towards the home country and the host country (Mieriņa and Koroļeva 2015). In part, these circumstances are reflected in the particular year of emigration or the wave of emigration (see Hazans in this volume). Identity as well as attachment to the local community continues to develop with time. The migrant's personal success in the new host country can also be expected to affect their sense of belonging (Gustafson 2005; Zepa and Kļave 2011). Having economic and social ties in the home and host countries are other major factors that can affect migrant attachment to a community or country – particularly the social ties (Mieriņa and Koroļeva 2015; Ros 2010). Finally, attitudes towards state institutions both in the home and host countries are linked to attachment to the country itself (Mieriņa 2015).

The formation of a sense of belonging is a complex process, often inwardly complicated. A person who left their motherland and settled in another country searches for new objects of belonging. A fresh sense of belonging develops in relation to the people and places in their new life as they overcome the internal contradictions between wanting to be similar and belong to the 'others' and wishing to remain unique and different from them. The sense of belonging to a group and place provides an ontological sense of security and, as May (2011) notes, it bears a mostly positive connotation. If belonging is understood as a sense that helps an individual cope with the surrounding world, then it is inevitable that non-belonging can be

characterised as a burden (May 2011, p. 373). Non-identification with a place can lead to negative consequences and create the feeling of detachment and emptiness. It facilitates the development of such symptoms as longing for home, depression, desolation and an unbearable feeling of emptiness.

The formation of the sense of belonging and its transformation in emigration has emerged as a significant research theme, because preservation of the sense of belonging to the motherland and the formation of new feelings towards the new land of residence would determine to a large extent the success of integration, as well as acting as an influence on a person's decision whether to settle in the new country or return home (Kēšāne 2011). However, previous studies have operationalised migrants' identity predominantly in terms of their belonging to a particular place or group of people (Alonso and Oiarzabal 2010; Brewer 1991), overlooking the fact that identity is multi-faceted, and various combinations of attitudes towards their home country, host country or the global community are possible. This study aims to fill this gap in the knowledge and shed new light on the complex identities of Latvian migrants. It also explores a diverse set of factors that impact the formation of the sense of belonging.

### 4.3 Data and Methods

We used *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* weighted survey data to analyse the sense of belonging and characterise a person's identity. Our definition of 'emigrants' in this chapter included all ethnic Latvians and Latvian nationals outside Latvia regardless of the year of emigration, ethnicity or citizenship (n = 14,051; for detailed information on survey methodology and the design of statistical weights see Goldmanis (2015) and Mieriņa in this volume).

Drawing from the previously described theoretical insights, we formulated the following hypothetical assumptions regarding factors upon which the sense of belonging and identification depends:

- Background factors: the length of time a person has lived abroad, the wave of emigration, the aim of that emigration, the occupation in the host country, the relation to family and friends in Latvia, the social ties in Latvia and abroad and whether or not the migrant had a property in Latvia;
- Subjective factors: satisfaction with different areas of one's life, feelings of trust and attitude towards the institutions of Latvia and the host country and the reasons for emigrating in the first place.

A five-point Likert scale was used for measuring responses characterising a sense of belonging (to ten social and territorial groups), including the categories 'I feel strongly that I belong', 'I tend to feel that I belong', 'I neither feel I belong nor do I feel I do not belong', 'I tend to feel that I do not belong', 'I feel strongly that I do not belong'. The sense of 'closeness of belonging' to a specific territory was measured on a four-point scale in categories such as 'very close', 'close', 'not very

close', and 'not close at all'. *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* study explored notions of belonging in three circles: the primary circle, formed by family ties and contacts with family members; the secondary circle of friends and the tertiary circle of contacts with groups in society and participation in social organisations.

In order to reveal the various types of belonging and to arrive at a relatively homogeneous groups of respondents we first conducted cluster analysis using the K-means method of merging clusters. The analysis was conducted on all variables mentioned above related to the sense of belonging. Cluster membership, distance information and F statistics were saved, to provide information about the contribution of each variable to the separation of the groups (see Table A1 and A2 in the Appendix). This allowed the clustering of a large number of observations into a small number of categories, characterised by the mean points of belonging in one category being relatively close to one other – that is, a grouping based on similarity in scoring. However, the distances between these categories or groups was significantly larger than the distances between the points within one individual defined category.

Considering the differences mentioned previously in the intensity of the sense of belonging scales, standardised values were included in the cluster analysis. Initial cluster centres for the first round were established as a means for cases equal to the number of clusters and then iterated.

For choosing an appropriate number of clusters, two, three and four-cluster models were compared, looking for a solution with the most proportional distribution of respondents between clusters, the biggest distances between clusters and distribution of F values.

In the next step of the analysis we used multinomial regression models that allowed the identification of factors that are important for the formation of a sense of belonging.

Among the independent variables we included:

1. Socio-demographic characteristics: age, gender, ethnicity, level of education, current occupation, financial situation, type of settlement;
2. Experience of migration: year of last emigration (i.e., emigration wave), main reason for emigration, aim of emigration;
3. Social networks: family members or friends that still live in Latvia, having friends who are natives of the country;
4. Subjective evaluations: satisfaction with different areas of life, changes in satisfaction since emigrating from Latvia, trust in the Latvian and host country's government.

The quantitative data of the emigrant survey included very detailed measurements of practically all areas of life.<sup>1</sup> However, on only very few occasions were the original questions kept in the analysis. Several nominal variables as well as several

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<sup>1</sup>Considering the large number of variables, a full list of original variables and their descriptive statistics is available from the author on request.

categorical scales were recoded into dichotomous variables; for example, the statement that ‘the respondent has close friends that live in Latvia – yes or no?’

If the nominal variable had more than two values and one could serve as a reference category for others, we used the system of coding indicators. In other cases, based on the initial measurements obtained in the survey, new variables were calculated.

## 4.4 Identity of Latvian Migrants

In line with national surveys of people living in Latvia, the emigrants’ answers showed that people felt a stronger sense of belonging to their closest social groups (family and friends), rather than to social categories (e.g., Latvia, the host country, inhabitants of Europe) (Koroļeva and Rungule 2013). Almost all respondents (93%) felt close (i.e. ‘very close’ and ‘close’) to their family, 85% felt close to their friends (Table 4.2, column 1). The next strongest association was with their ethnic group: 73% felt close to people of their own ethnicity. Approximately half the respondents (47–57%) felt close to other emigrants from Latvia living abroad, to inhabitants of Latvia, as well as to Europeans, world citizens, inhabitants of the host country and

**Table 4.1** Strong sense of belonging to different social groups: distribution of answers by clusters, %

Feel very close or close to...	The whole sample	Well integrated in (cluster 1)	Home-rejecting (cluster 2)	Host-rejecting (cluster 3)	Home-leaning (cluster 4)	n
Your family	93	98	84	91	98	9785
Your group of friends	85	96	73	75	89	9598
Your religious denomination	31	42	21	28	32	8762
Inhabitants of Latvia	56	70	17	47	83	9415
People of your ethnic group (Latvians, Russians, Poles, etc.)	73	88	45	62	91	9432
People from Latvia abroad	53	74	27	31	65	9399
People living in your neighbourhood/local area (village, city block etc.) in [country]	47	84	54	3	22	9434
People living in [country]	50	85	59	3	26	9526
Europeans	54	75	43	5	65	9352
People living in the world as a whole	57	76	50	12	64	9200

Source: The author, based on *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey  
Differences between clusters significant at  $p < 0.001$  level

the neighbourhood they live in. The sense of belonging to a religious group or community was somewhat weaker (Table 4.1).

It is clear that national identity still dominates the 'foreign' or 'new' identity among members of the Latvian diaspora abroad, highlighted by the fact that most respondents felt closer to Latvia than to their host country. Overall, 73–74% felt close or very close to the place they lived in Latvia and the place where they spent their childhood. The sense of belonging to Latvia in general indirectly implies not just a territorial belonging but also other dimensions of national identity such as political, cultural or psychological belonging. This might explain a relatively weaker attachment to 'Latvia' than to a particular place in Latvia: only 63% of emigrants felt closely or very closely attached to Latvia (Table 4.2). At the same time, 58% of members of the Latvian diaspora felt attached to the country they currently lived in, and 51% to the place (city, village) they currently lived in.

Of course, without in-depth analysis, these numbers illustrate only the hierarchy of the sense of belonging. Therefore, we then used cluster analysis to distinguish typological groups of belonging. Out of all the versions, a four-cluster solution was selected as the most optimal, based on statistical characteristics and the interpretation of the results. The socio-demographic characteristics of these groups is shown in Table A1 in the Appendix. Based on their characteristics, the typological groups can be labelled as follows:

Cluster 1: 'well integrated';

Cluster 2: 'home-rejecting';

Cluster 3: 'host-rejecting';

Cluster 4: 'home-leaning'.

**Table 4.2** Territorial and place attachment: distribution of answers in the sample and in clusters, %

Feel very close or close to ...	The whole sample	Well integrated (cluster 1)	Home-rejecting (cluster 2)	Host-rejecting (cluster 3)	Home-leaning (cluster 4)	n
The place where you spent your childhood	73	85	39	84	90	9660
The place (city, town, village, county) you lived in Latvia prior to moving away	74	86	35	85	94	9385
Latvia as a whole	63	78	19	64	90	9612
The place (city, town, village, county) you are living in now [country]	51	91	67	14	12	9429
The country you are living in now	58	95	76	13	21	9418
Europe	47	65	36	10	54	8980

Source: The author, based on *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey

Differences between clusters significant at  $p < 0.001$  level

**Table 4.3** The distribution of respondents by clusters

	Number of observations		%
	Unweighted data	Weighted data	
Cluster 1 well integrated	3349	2992	30
Cluster 2 home-rejecting	2731	2859	28
Cluster 3 host-rejecting	1012	1276	13
Cluster 4 home-leaning	3088	2947	29

Source: The author, based on *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey

The size of clusters is shown in Table 4.3. Clusters 1, 2, and 4 are similarly-sized (around 30%) while 13% of respondents belong to Cluster 3.

## 4.5 Characteristics of Groups

In this section we look at the characteristic traits of the groups distinguished as a result of this cluster analysis, including providing a socio-demographic description of these groups and identifying the differences in their opinions and behaviour. In detecting the relationships between variables, we use correlation tables and calculations of standardised residuals (see Table A3 in Appendix). We also explore the main factors affecting the development of certain combinations of feelings of attachment.

### 4.5.1 Well Integrated

The first cluster includes respondents that are well integrated into their current country of residence and felt a very strong sense of belonging to it. Almost all respondents in this cluster (95%) felt closely or very closely attached to the host country and the place (city, town, etc.) where they currently lived (91%). Moreover, a large proportion of respondents representing this cluster felt closely or very closely attached to people living in their current country of residence (85% compared to the sample average of 50%) and to people living in their neighbourhood or local area (84% compared to the sample average of 47%) (Tables 4.2 and 4.3).

Based on a very distinct host country identity, we can characterise this group of emigrants as ‘well integrated’ into the host country. However, a huge proportion of the representatives of this cluster also felt strongly attached to Latvia, to inhabitants of Latvia and to people from Latvia abroad. Compared to other groups in the typology, most representatives of this group (70% compared to a sample average of 56%) felt attached to inhabitants of Latvia, and – at 88% – the identification with one’s ethnic group was even stronger. Most (74% compared to a sample average of 53%) felt close to other immigrants from Latvia, as well as to Europeans and inhabitants

of the world as a whole. 78% felt close or very close to Latvia, and the attachment was even higher to the place they lived before emigrating (86%) or where they spent their childhood (85%).

Analysis of the socio-demographic characteristics of clusters confirms that the timing and amount of time spent abroad has a significant impact on the formation of an individual's sense of belonging. A sizeable percentage of those who were well integrated had spent a considerable amount of time in the host country (Table 4.4). Among the well integrated there were a few who left Latvia because they could not find a job there, but a significant number (22%) who joined their family or started a family abroad. Particularly for those who married 'locals', the family itself can become a very important bridge to integration.

As shown by the socio-demographic analysis of clusters, family is the most important factor in the differentiation of dimensions of belonging. There were a few 'well-adapted' migrants among those respondents whose family members – for example, a spouse or children – still lived in Latvia, but a comparatively high number among them with nobody in Latvia.

Thus, family ties can either facilitate or hold back integration by tying an individual emotionally to a particular place where the family lives. In line with their inclusive identity, the well integrated migrants tend to have friends that include both locals and Latvians in the host country and to be active in both the host country's organisations and the Latvian community.

The results confirm that satisfaction with life is another important factor for integration. The 'well integrated' were more satisfied with life after leaving Latvia than others. Of all groups, they were the most satisfied with their job, family, relationships with people, home, education, standard of living and life as a whole.

Several dimensions of trust were covered in the survey: trust in the government of Latvia, its mass media, police and courts; trust in the host country's government and in the European Parliament. The results revealed that, in general, the well integrated migrants tended to have higher levels of trust in the host country's government (Table 4.5).

Finally, in the country with the largest flow of emigration from Latvia – the United Kingdom – the probability is significantly lower of finding 'well integrated' types of migrant. This could be explained by migrants having less need to socialise

**Table 4.4** Groups of belonging depending on wave of emigration, %

Clusters/year of emigration	Well integrated	Home-rejecting	Host-rejecting	Home-leaning
Before 1991	47	24	12	17
1991–1999	37	29	9	25
2000–2003	32	29	12	27
2004–2008	28	32	13	27
2009–2011	28	32	11	29
After 2011	23	24	17	36

Source: The author, based on *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey

n = 10,075; relationship between clusters and the time of emigration is significant at  $p < 0.001$  level

**Table 4.5** Relationship between the dimensions of belonging and the level of trust (average)

	Average in sample	Well integrated	Home-rejecting	Host-rejecting	Home-leaning	Number of cases (n)
Trust in...the government of Latvia	1.56	1.72	1.09	1.12	2.08	8262
... the government of the host country	5.87	6.61	6.31	4.45	5.30	7759
... the European Parliament	3.80	4.38	3.56	2.66	3.99	7456
... the mass media of Latvia (the press and TV)	3.61	3.94	2.97	3.02	4.19	8136
... the system of police and courts in Latvia	2.76	2.89	2.17	2.53	3.32	8007

Source: The author, based on *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey  
Evaluations on a scale from 0 to 10

with locals compared to those who lived in countries where the Latvian emigrant community was smaller.

Interestingly, the ‘well integrated’ included more women than men (62% vs. 38%).

### 4.5.2 *Home-Rejecting*

The second cluster of the typology – ‘home-rejecting’ – is characterised by a moderately strong sense of belonging to the current country of residence and a strong negative attitude towards their country of origin, i.e., Latvia, and towards all dimensions of national identity. A distinct characteristic of the group was their sense of belonging to the inhabitants of the host country and the inhabitants of the neighbourhood or local area they currently lived in. Overall, 59% of this group felt close or very close to the inhabitants of the host country and 54% felt close or very close to people living in their neighbourhood or local area. At the same time, emigrants in this group demonstrated a comparatively alienated attitude towards everything related to Latvia, as well as displaying weak national identity. This was clearly demonstrated by the distribution of answers on their sense of belonging. Just 17% of respondents felt attached to the inhabitants of Latvia and 27% to other Latvians abroad. Just 19% of this group felt close to Latvia.



Socio-demographic analysis of clusters showed that economic conditions forced many in this group to leave Latvia, due to social vulnerability or similar reasons. Thirty-three percent left Latvia during the years of economic crisis (2009–2011). For them more than for others the main reasons for moving abroad were a desire to improve their quality of life and live in a country with better social guarantees. Such reasoning increases the probability of negative associations when thinking of Latvia (displaying a weaker emotional belonging, which in our data is identified by belonging to the 'home-rejecting' cluster).

'Home-rejecting' types of attitudes were more common among those who did not have any ongoing connection to Latvia, such as property or friends, yet did have friends among locals. One must note though that in this analysis we were unable to disentangle causal relationships.

Comparatively often the 'home-rejecting' migrant type could be found in the emigrant communities in Ireland and in Southern European countries. They had practically no trust at all in the Latvian government or the Latvian police or courts, yet comparatively high levels of trust in the host country's government (Table 4.5). One can conclude that there is clearly a link between belonging to this group and attitudes towards home and the host country's institutions. The exact mechanisms are not clear, but one possible explanation is that the sense of belonging to a country is closely intertwined with a sense of attachment or respect towards that country's institutions.

### 4.5.3 *Host-Rejecting*

The respondents who belonged to the third cluster – that of 'host-rejecting' – were characterised by weak belonging to the host country. That is, they did not feel 'very close' or 'close at all' to the host country and its inhabitants. Direct measurement of the sense of belonging showed that just 3% of this group felt close or very close to the inhabitants of the host country or the residents of their current neighbourhood or locality; 13–14% felt attached to their host country and the place they currently resided in (Tables 4.2 and 4.3).

This group felt weak subjective ties to the inhabitants of Europe or of the world. However, it possessed a significantly stronger national identity: 47% felt close or very close to the inhabitants of Latvia, and 31% to people from Latvia abroad. The ethnic identity was even stronger: 62% felt close or very close to their ethnic group. The sense of belonging to Latvia was also strong, at 62%. Nostalgic feelings towards Latvia seem to have been reflected in respondents feeling very strongly attached to the place where they spent their childhood and to the place they lived in Latvia before emigrating (84–85%).

Host-rejection was more common among those who emigrated very recently, after 2011. Thus, they had little time to develop attachments to their new host country.

The key characteristics for this group – slower adaptation and an incapability or unwillingness to integrate into the country of residence – can depend on several factors, including individual, psychological and personal characteristics. The socio-demographic analysis showed that more often than others, people who belong to this group emigrated because they could not find a job in Latvia or had financial difficulties, such as being unable to pay loans, i.e., they had no other choice.

The majority (60%) emigrated with the aim of finding work. It is possible that many of these emigrants had not had the time but also lacked the willingness to belong to their current host country and integrate into its society.

The ‘host-rejecting’ migrants often had friends or family members still living in Latvia, such as a spouse or children, parents or other close relatives. This precluded them from attaching themselves to another country. They were less likely to have friends among locals and were not active in any organisations either. Thus, their social ties with their new host country were weak too.

In this group there were comparatively large numbers of men, people with lower levels of education and ethnicities other than Latvian, as well as those struggling financially. Another characteristic of this group was their dissatisfaction with various areas of life, including their job, education, home and so on. These levels of dissatisfaction had increased after emigration. Accordingly, increased discontent with certain spheres of life can strengthen a migrant’s sense of belonging to their country of origin.

The ‘host-rejecting’ migrants had very low levels of trust in any institutions (Table 4.5). It is likely that their reserved attitudes towards the host country are linked with feelings of insecurity, vulnerability and discomfort in an environment they did not know well and could not trust. The highest numbers of host-rejecting Latvian migrants were found in the UK and Ireland, with comparatively lower levels in other Western countries.

#### **4.5.4 *Home-Leaning***

The dimensions of belonging within the fourth and final cluster – that of ‘home-leaning’ – are similar to the ‘well integrated’. However, the sense of belonging both to the host country and to the country of origin is less intense. Representatives of this group, compared to others, more often identified with Europeans (65%) and with inhabitants of the world (66%). They also felt a sense of belonging, albeit a weaker one, to the inhabitants of the host country. However, their strongest feelings were towards Latvia and anything related to Latvia; 83% felt close or very close to the inhabitants of Latvia and 65% to other people from Latvia abroad (Tables 4.2 and 4.3). Their strong emotional ties to Latvia were confirmed by the fact that a

large majority of respondents felt very close to the place in Latvia where they spent their childhood (90%) or the place they lived before emigrating (94%).

More often than others, the 'home-leaning' type of migrants had friends in Latvia and met or communicated with them regularly. Like the host-rejecting migrants, they also often had property in Latvia, but did not have friends among the local population. This demonstrates that having close friends back home increased feelings of nostalgia toward the home country.

Those who had become less satisfied with life after leaving Latvia were more likely to belong to this group, and in general evaluated their satisfaction with various areas of life at lower levels than other groups, except for the host-rejecting cluster.

As with the host-rejecting migrants, many had left Latvia recently. Comparatively often the main reason given for leaving was development, career opportunities (including for children) or family-related reasons. In terms of the occupation breakdown of this group, there were more students, unemployed and people taking care of family than in the other groups.

However, the 'home-leaning' migrants had more trust in Latvian institutions than other groups (see Table 4.5) – a conclusion that attests to their overall positive attitude towards anything Latvian.

## 4.6 Factors That Affect the Sense of Belonging

While the separation of emigrant 'types' into clusters points to different characteristics and various ways of belonging, it is important to understand which factors affect the development of certain kinds of belonging. Therefore, we performed multinomial regression analysis with 'well integrated' as the reference category (Table A4 in the Appendix). The model fit was very good. The addition of the predictors to a model that contained only the intercept significantly improved the fit between the model and the data,  $\chi^2 = 2717$  (df = 180), Nagelkerke  $R^2 = .43$ ,  $p < .001$ .

First, the analysis showed that having close friends in Latvia or friends from Latvia who lived in the host country, or having friends among the 'locals' was a significant pre-condition to a more successful adaptation in a foreign country and to maintaining both a sense of belonging to the host country and a bond with Latvia as well. Having close friends in Latvia reduced the probability of ending up in the group negatively disposed towards Latvia, and increased the probability of ending up in the 'host-rejecting' group – as opposed to being well-integrated. Not having Latvian friends abroad mattered too for those with 'host-rejecting' attitudes. Moreover, not having made friends with the 'locals' increased the risk of falling into the 'host-rejecting' or 'home-leaning' group. This result clearly demonstrates that social inclusion is an avenue to integration. The home-leaning respondents were more likely than the well-integrated to have extended family in Latvia, probably contributing to their more pronounced feelings of nostalgia. Besides friends and family, economic ties such as having a property in Latvia also strengthened attachment to the homeland.

Participation in social organisations can serve as a stimulus or reason to foster feelings of belonging, and can also be a consequence of a sense of belonging that is forming or already formed. Based on the results of this analysis, one can conclude that the maintenance of a sense of belonging to Latvia was facilitated by involvement in the organisations of the Latvian diaspora or in both Latvian and international organisations in the host country. This also contributed to a more successful adaptation to the host country and integration into it. This increased the probability that the migrant would fall into the ‘well integrated’ group as opposed to the ‘home-rejecting’ group. Significantly, it attests to the importance of diaspora organisations in preserving national identity.

As expected, one of the factors affecting identity formation was life satisfaction. Well integrated migrants tended to be more satisfied with life as a whole than others. They reported more often that their life satisfaction had increased, as opposed to ‘host-rejecting’ migrants who were more likely to see a deterioration in their life satisfaction.

One characteristic distinguishing the home-leaning migrants from others was their trust in the government of Latvia, whereas the well integrated had the highest level of trust in the host country’s government. This result shows that positive beliefs about the government can facilitate the formation of overall positive feelings towards that country.

Both cluster analysis and statistical indicators of the regression model confirm that the probability of successful adaptation and integration into the host country is greater the longer a migrant is away from the country of origin. This is because closer ties and a sense of belonging develop to this new country of residence, as well as a sense of being part of the local neighbourhood (see Table 4.4). Interestingly, the home-rejecting migrants tended to live in larger cities, smaller cities or towns, while well integrated migrants were found more often in rural areas.

Significantly less often than both home-rejecting and host-rejecting migrants, the well integrated migrants emigrated due to economic reasons or dislike of the political processes in Latvia.

The probability of becoming a ‘well integrated’ migrant was higher among those for whom the main reason for emigration was marriage (to a foreigner) than it was among the home-rejecting migrants. Emigrants with secondary or lower levels of education tended to be less well adapted or integrated into the host country, as were men.

However, Latvians tended to be over-represented among the well integrated migrants while Russians were more often found in the ‘home-rejecting’ group of migrants and less often in the ‘home-leaning’ group.

## 4.7 Conclusions

The empirical analysis demonstrates that the sense of belonging is multi-faceted and can be grouped depending on the intensity of identification with certain dimensions of belonging. The characteristics of each group of clusters in this chapter clearly points to the main elements that affect the maintenance or weakening of a sense of belonging to Latvia, as well as a sense of belonging to the host country. On the other hand, the results of the regression analysis point to the main factors that affect the formation of different types of belonging.

An important factor in the transformation of belonging abroad is the time period or wave in which emigration took place. The wave of emigration is closely linked to a migrant's reasons for leaving. Social ties are also important in forming a sense of belonging, for example, if the migrant lives alone or with their family and friends. National identity is affected by whether part of a respondent's family – or the family or friends of their parents – still live in Latvia, as well as by having a property in Latvia.

Subjective attitudes and evaluations are the second most important group of factors affecting belonging. Satisfaction with all areas of life – for example, good economic conditions and personal life – will strengthen the sense of belonging to the country of origin and the new host country alike. The same can be said about institutional trust. A stronger sense of belonging both to Latvia and the host country is linked to higher levels of trust in the government of the host country and Latvia. Social participation is important too: being involved in diaspora groups helps maintain feelings of national identity.

Belonging to the group of well integrated migrants is linked to a significant extent to marrying a 'foreigner', living with their family and satisfaction with all areas of life in the host country. Conversely, integration is hindered by all the economic reasons for emigration, such as difficulty finding a job, financial problems etc., as well as a dislike of the political processes in Latvia. Satisfaction with life in general and higher levels of trust facilitates the formation of a positive sense of belonging to the host country as well as to the country of origin. Dissatisfaction with work, family and socio-economic conditions significantly facilitates alienation and the lack of a sense of belonging.

The term 'distance nationalism' (Brubaker 1996) is the most overarching for characterising differences in the dimensions of belonging, as they are differentiated mainly by the sense of belonging to Latvia. Distance nationalism includes the result of the interaction between nationalism and migration characterised by the politically and socially specific relations of immigrants with regard to the host country as well as the country of origin. By using the term 'distance nationalism' in a broader

sense than the political manifestations of national identity that most researchers link the term with (Anderson 1992) we can use 'national identity' in the widest sense as belonging to a country, its territory and inhabitants. Distance nationalism in a diaspora can facilitate diverse relationships with the country of origin, emphasising both a willingness to co-operate as well as to confront (Kaprāns 2015).

Maintaining a powerful sense of national identity regardless of the level of integration into and attachment to the host country is facilitated by the frequency of social contacts with Latvia through friends or family that make one feel a strong connection. Separation from loved ones, dissatisfaction with work and unhappiness with life in general are factors that hinder the development of a sense of attachment to the new place of residence. It is possible that adaptation into the host country is also hindered by a gap between expectations of emigration – such as improving the quality of life, earning more, finding a better job and so on – and its reality.

The willingness to distance oneself from the country of origin is manifested in a very weak sense of national belonging (the 'home-rejecting' group). Most of these people emigrated during or after the years of economic crisis and possibly left with a sense of resentment. The most important reason for leaving was a desire to improve their quality of life. This group often does not have anyone left in Latvia to keep in touch with, no property there and few friends among Latvian emigrants. They develop friendships with locals. In terms of their political views, they do not trust anyone except the host country's government. However, as our data shows, weaker ties with Latvia do not automatically result in a stronger attachment to the host country. In the globalised world national identity without a strong social, economic and civic dimension cannot compete with other kinds of identities which determine the diversity of belonging and identification (Kēšāne 2011).

The character of emigration has changed. Migration is no longer a one-directional, permanent and irreversible process, involving breaking ties with the country of origin. Modern technology makes it much easier to keep in touch with 'home', which increases the probability of some emigrants returning. It is clear, however, that most will not. Migrants leave their homeland for good reasons, and people search for and find new lives in new countries. As shown by our study, most Latvian emigrants are satisfied with their lives after leaving. They are happy with their work, their working conditions and their lives in general, leading to the conclusion that there is little hope the majority of those who left will return soon. A sense of belonging to Latvia is not enough to bring them back.

## Appendix

**Table A1** Final cluster centers

Feel very close or close to...	Well integrated (cluster 1)	Home-rejecting (cluster 2)	Host-rejecting (cluster 3)	Home-leaning (cluster 4)
Your family	-.29	.47	.10	-.20
Your group of friends	-.40	.41	.37	-.14
Your religious denomination	-.26	.25	.11	-.04
Inhabitants of Latvia	-.29	.82	.24	-.58
People of your ethnic group (Latvians, Russians, Poles, etc.)	-.37	.69	.29	-.42
People from Latvia abroad	-.49	.58	.49	-.27
People living in your neighborhood/local area (village, city block etc.) in [country]	-.72	-.20	1.24	.41
People living in [country]	-.71	-.29	1.42	.40
Europeans	-.45	.18	1.38	-.31
People living in the world as a whole	-.38	.11	1.21	-.24
The place where you spent your childhood	-.28	.84	-.21	-.43
The place (city, town, village, county) you lived in Latvia prior to moving away	-.28	.92	-.25	-.51
Latvia as a whole	-.27	.91	.02	-.61
The place (city, town, village, county) you are living in now [country]	-.80	-.26	.91	.69
The country you are living in now	-.75	-.33	1.01	.65
Europe	-.43	.20	.87	-.14

Source: The author, based on *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey

**Table A2** Distances between final cluster centers

	Well integrated (cluster 1)	Home-rejecting (cluster 2)	Host-rejecting (cluster 3)	Home-leaning (cluster 4)
Well integrated (cluster 1)		3.28	4.93	2.69
Home-rejecting (cluster 2)			3.81	3.75
Host-rejecting (cluster 3)				3.25
Home-leaning (cluster 4)				

Source: The author, based on *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey

**Table A3** Socio-demographic characteristics of the typological groups calculated on the basis of their sense of belonging

	total % and n	Well integrated	Home-rejecting	Host-rejecting	Home-leaning	Sig X2	df.	Sig.
Gender						144.520a	3	.000
Male	40.8 (4114)	37.8 (-4.1)	40.0	56.1 (11.9)	38.2 (-3.5)			
Female	59.2 (5961)	62.2 (4.1)	60.0	43.9 (-11.9)	61.8 (3.5)			
Age						164.618a	15	.000
15–24	19.4 (1953)	17.7 (-2.7)	16.8 (-4.1)	20.2	23.2 (6.2)			
25–34	39.3 (3955)	37.5 (-2.4)	42.1 (3.6)	37.3	39.2			
35–44	17.7 (1779)	17.4	18.9 (2.0)	20.4 (2.7)	15.6 (-3.5)			
45–54	11.2 (1131)	11.4	10.7	11.1	11.6			
55–64	7.1 (714)	7.3	6.6	7.2	7.3			
65+	5.4 (544)	8.8 (9.9)	4.9	3.8 (-2.6)	3.1 (-6.7)			
Level of education						106.146a	6	.000
Low	20.7 (2090)	19.1 (-2.6)	18.9 (-2.8)	30.3 (9.0)	20.0			
Average	31.6 (3180)	30.3	33.7 (2.9)	32.2	30.5			
High	47.7 (4805)	50.5 (3.7)	47.4	37.5 (-7.8)	49.5 (2.3)			
Wave of emigration						385.077a	18	.000
All life outside of Latvia								
Before 1991	5.3 (531)	7.8 (7.3)	3.9 (-3.8)	2.4 (-5.0)	5.3			
1991–1999 g.	6.8 (683)	10.8 (10.5)	5.7 (-2.6)	6.2	3.9 (-7.3)			
2000–2003 g.	6.3 (633)	7.9 (4.3)	6.4	4.2 (-3.2)	5.5 (-2.2)			
2004–2008 g.	7.3 (735)	7.9	7.4	6.9	6.8			
2009–2011 g.	19.6 (1977)	18.5	21.8 (3.4)	20.3	18.3 (-2.1)			
After 2011 g.	29.3 (2947)	27.5 (-2.6)	33.4 (5.7)	25.3 (-3.3)	28.8			
Ethnicity	25.5 (2569)	19.6 (-8.8)	21.4 (-5.9)	34.7 (8.0)	31.4 (8.8)			
Latvian	58.1 (5857)	64.3 (8.2)	52.6 (-7.1)	46.5 (-9.0)	62.3 (5.4)	258.410a	6	.000
Russian	35.9 (3617)	27.5 (-11.4)	41.5 (7.3)	48.6 (10.1)	33.5 (-3.3)			
Other	5.9 (599)	8.1 (6.0)	5.9	4.9	4.2 (-4.7)			



Family members, friends in Latvia	Who (family, friends) still live in Latvia?					132.586a	9	.000
No one lives in Latvia	20.1 (1456)	24.1 (6.4)	20.0	18.5	16.7 (-5.3)			
Someone from respondent's family lives in Latvia (a spouse, a child)	15.2 (6061)	10.9 (-7.6)	14.7	22.0 (7.0)	17.1 (3.3)			
Someone from respondent's parents' family lives in Latvia (mother, father, sister, etc.)	63.2 (151)	63.3	64.3	58.0 (-4.0)	64.3			
A friend or friends live in Latvia	38.3 (6671)	37.3	39.7 (-2.5)	34.0	37.7 (2)			
Current occupation						214.710a	15	.000
Paid work	67.1 (638)	64.2 (-4.0)	71.0 (5.3)	72.9 (4.7)	63.7 (-4.6)			
Does not work and actively searches for a job	6.4 (963)	5.9	5.8	7.7 (2.0)	7.1			
Studies	9.7 (896)	8.6 (-2.3)	9.6	6.2 (-4.5)	12.3 (5.7)			
Taking care of children or other family members	9.0 (546)	9.1	7.3 (-3.7)	7.9	11.0 (4.5)			
Retired	5.5 (230)	9.2 (10.6)	4.6 (-2.6)	3.5 (-3.3)	3.4 (-5.7)			
Other	2.3 (3008)	2.9 (2.7)	1.7 (-2.4)	1.8	2.5			
Countries						225.880a	30	.000
The UK	29.9 (1013)	26.3 (-5.1)	30.7	37.3 (6.2)	29.6			
Germany	10.1 (707)	9.3	10.9	10.7	9.7			
Ireland	7.0 (297)	7.2	8.3 (3.1)	8.8 (2.7)	4.9 (-5.4)			
Norway	2.9 (2218)	2.8	2.5	3.4	3.3			
USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand	22.0 (461)	23.2	21.9	17.5 (-4.2)	22.9			
Nordic countries, excluding Norway	4.6 (982)	5.5 (2.8)	4.5 (-.2)	3.7 (-1.6)	4.1			
NVS countries and Georgia	9.8 (386)	9.5	7.6 (-4.6)	8.8	12.6 (6.1)			
Southern European countries	3.8 (528)	4.3	4.6 (2.5)	3.1	3.0 (-2.8)			
Western European countries, except for UK, DE, IE	5.2 (288)	5.1	4.8	3.6 (-2.8)	6.5 (3.6)			
Eastern European countries (in the EU)	2.9 (181)	4.4 (5.9)	2.3 (-2.1)	2.7	1.9 (-3.6)			

(continued)

Table A3 (continued)

	total % and n	Well integrated	Home-rejecting	Host-rejecting	Home-leaning	Sig X2	df.	Sig.
Other countries	1.8	2.5	1.9	.6	1.6			
Financial situation of the household	Taking into account your household's total income, is your household able to make ends meet?							
With great difficulty	1.2 (232)	.3 (-4.6)	.9	2.5 (4.5)	1.6 (2.7)			
With difficulty	2.7 (895)	1.4 (-4.7)	1.7 (-3.9)	3.5	4.7 (7.3)			
With some difficulty	10.6 (2597)	8.4 (-4.0)	8.3 (-4.4)	17.0 (7.5)	12.0 (2.7)			
Fairly easily	30.7 (2623)	29.5	32.7 (2.6)	30.6	29.8			
Easily	31.0 (2018)	34.3 (4.1)	29.9	27.7 (-2.6)	30.4			
Very easily	23.8 (2973)	26.1 (3.0)	26.5 (3.6)	18.7 (-4.3)	21.4 (-3.4)			
Reasons for emigrating	Main reason for leaving Latvia							
Financial difficulties, including inability to pay loans	18.2 (1318)	16.2 (-3.1)	18.6	23.9 (5.4)	17.3	456.522a	24	.000
Willingness to improve the quality of live, to live in a country with better social guarantees	15.1 (801)	15.1	20.3 (8.6)	13.0 (-2.10)	11.1 (-6.8)			
Opportunity to earn more abroad	9.2 (1115)	9.0	8.9	10.0	9.3			
Development, career opportunities (including for children)	12.8 (1375)	12.2	10.4 (-4.3)	10.1 (-3.0)	16.9 (7.5)			
Did not like the political processes and political environment in Latvia	15.8 (421)	14.8	21.4 (9.2)	16.6	10.9 (-8.3)			
Could not find a job in Latvia	4.8 (731)	3.4 (-3.8)	3.3 (-4.2)	8.8 (6.7)	5.8 (2.9)			
Marriage to a foreigner	8.4 (702)	11.7 (7.0)	4.7 (-8.0)	5.2 (-4.2)	10.3 (4.2)			
Left together with the family or joined them	8.0 (6690)	9.0 (2.0)	6.1 (-4.3)	6.3 (-2.30)	9.8 (4.0)			
Other reason, including traveling the world	7.7 (4701)	8.6 (1.9)	6.4 (-2.7)	6.2 (-2.0)	8.7 (2.3)			
Aim of emigration	Main aim of emigration							
Work	54.1 (1729)	50.1 (-4.5)	57.7 (4.4)	60.6 (4.8)	51.3 (-3.4)	144.198a	9	.000
Studies	19.9 (1526)	19.8	20.0	17.1 (-2.5)	21.1			

Joining the family or starting a family	17.6 (739)	22.1 (6.9)	13.1 (-7.0)	11.2 (-6.0)	20.4 (4.6)		
Other	8.5	7.9	9.2	11.1 (3.4)	7.2 (-2.8)		
The frequency of going to Latvia	On average, how often do you visit Latvia?					222.430a	12 .000
Has not been at all	11.8	6.8 (-8.6)	15.0 (5.4)	15.0 (3.3)	12.2		
Less often than once every 6 months	50.6	55.9 (5.8)	56.3 (6.2)	43.9 (-4.4)	42.7 (-8.7)		
Once every 6 months	25.7	26.1	21.2 (-5.6)	25.9	29.6 (5.0)		
At least once every 3 months	12.0	11.3	7.6 (-7.3)	15.2 (3.2)	15.5 (6.0)		
Frequency of social contacts	How often do you communicate with friends or family in Latvia?					222.430a	12 .000
Never	.7	.8	1.0	.3	.7		
Less often than once per month	7.3	6.8	11.9 (9.9)	7.2	3.6 (-8.4)		
1-3 times a month	20.8	17.4 (-4.7)	25.0 (5.7)	22.5	19.4 (-2.1)		
At least once per week	39.4	40.6	38.0	39.7	39.3		
Every day or almost every day	31.8	34.5 (3.2)	24.1 (-9.3)	30.3	37.1 (6.7)		
Close friend/friends in Latvia	Do you have any close friends that live in Latvia?					156.873a	3 .000
No	10.0	9.4	15.9 (11.6)	8.9	5.7 (-9.1)		
Yes	90.0	90.6	84.1 (-11.6)	91.1	94.3 (9.1)		
Close friend/friends from Latvia in the host country	Do you have any close friends from Latvia that live in [country]?					31.924a	3 .000
No	37.7	33.9 (-5.0)	37.5	39.0	41.1 (4.4)		
Yes	62.3	66.1 (5.0)	62.5	61.0	58.9 (-4.4)		
Close friend/friends that are "locals"	Do you have any close friends that are 'locals' in [country]?					303.852a	3 .000
No	35.0	27.4 (-9.9)	27.9 (-8.8)	48.6 (10.2)	43.6 (11.2)		
Yes	65.0	72.6 (9.9)	72.1 (8.8)	51.4 (-10.2)	56.4 (-11.2)		
Property in Latvia	Has a land, apartment or house in Latvia					137.546a	3 .000
No property in Latvia	40.7	41.8	48.4 (9.8)	32.4 (-6.5)	35.8 (-6.5)		
Has a land or an apartment/house	59.3	58.2	51.6 (-9.8)	67.6 (6.5)	64.2 (6.5)		
Participation	Participation in the activities of different organisations					279.529a	9 .000

(continued)

Table A3 (continued)

	total % and n	Well integrated	Home-rejecting	Host-rejecting	Home-leaning	Sig X2	df.	Sig.
Participates in both Latvian and host country's organisations	8.1	14.0 (13.7)	4.5 (-7.9)	3.5 (-6.20)	7.4 (-1.5)			
Participates only in Latvian organisations	7.7	9.2 (3.5)	5.8 (-4.4)	4.5 (-4.4)	9.5 (4.0)			
Participates only in host country's organisations	16.7	15.4 (-2.1)	17.9 (2.0)	18.3	16.0			
Does not engage in activities of any organisations	67.5	61.3 (-8.4)	71.8 (5.5)	73.7 (4.9)	67.1			
Satisfaction with different areas of life (on a scale from 1 to 10)								
Job (main job)	7.9	8.5	8.3	6.8	7.5	241.2	3	.000
Working conditions	8.0	8.5	8.4	7.1	7.7	165.5	3	.000
Family life	7.8	8.6	8.3	6.9	7.3	188.6	3	.000
Relationships with people outside your family	7.9	8.6	8.4	6.9	7.4	342.8	3	.000
Your home/dwelling	8.0	8.7	8.4	6.9	7.7	282.7	3	.000
Your standard of living	8.2	8.7	8.5	7.4	7.7	228.0	3	.000
Your education	7.5	8.0	7.8	6.7	7.3	108.0	3	.000
Your health	7.9	8.3	8.3	7.1	7.6	141.1	3	.000
Your life as a whole	8.2	8.8	8.6	7.1	7.7	365.8	3	.000
Since moving away from Latvia, have you now become more or less satisfied with your life as a whole?						816.2	6	.000
More satisfied	72.1	84.4	82.5	51.9	60.2			
Equally satisfied	21.8	13.8	15.4	31.4	29.7			
Less satisfied	6.1	1.8	2.2	16.7	10.1			

The table shows the percentage distributions in the cluster and the *adjusted standardized residuals* that is shown in parentheses in case it is statistically significant,  $> 1.96$  or  $< -1.96$

Source: The author, based on *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey

**Table A4** Factors affecting the dimensions of belonging: results of the multinomial regression

Ref. well integrated	Home-rejecting			Host-rejecting			Home-leaning		
	B	Std. error	Sig.	B	Std. error	Sig.	B	Std. error	Sig.
Intercept	.387	.847	.648	4.793	1.263	.000	4.881	.864	.000
Gender	.038	.092	.684	-.594	.132	.000	-.104	.096	.281
Latvian	-.303	.197	.123	-.928	.305	.002	-1.284	.277	.000
Russian	.423	.195	.030	.040	.304	.895	-.937	.274	.001
Other	-.035	.244	.885	-.799	.405	.048	-1.582	.332	.000
A friend or friends live in Latvia	-.207	.091	.024	.375	.130	.004	.018	.093	.849
Someone from respondent’s family lives in Latvia (a spouse, a child)	.580	.234	.013	.742	.303	.014	-.114	.225	.613
Someone from respondent’s parents family lives in Latvia (mother, father, sister, etc.)	.331	.221	.134	.138	.290	.633	-.470	.210	.025
Noone lives in Latvia	.169	.240	.480	-.283	.330	.391	-.344	.232	.139
Close friend/friends in Latvia	-1.069	.157	.000	.056	.268	.836	-.027	.194	.888
Close friend/friends from Latvia in the host country	-.432	.092	.000	-.554	.130	.000	-.256	.093	.006
Close friends that are “locals”	.120	.095	.205	-.594	.126	.000	-.551	.092	.000
Property in Latvia	-.515	.087	.000	.076	.128	.555	.213	.090	.018
Satisfaction with life as a whole	-.117	.033	.000	-.379	.039	.000	-.285	.031	.000
Trust in the government of Latvia	-.061	.021	.004	-.030	.030	.317	.086	.020	.000
Trust in the government of host country	-.081	.018	.000	-.316	.024	.000	-.224	.018	.000
Age (ref.65+)									
15–24	.567	.496	.253	.765	.853	.370	.302	.489	.536
25–34	.817	.480	.088	.788	.836	.346	.347	.474	.464
35–44	.778	.480	.105	.458	.836	.584	.236	.474	.618
45–54	1.106	.485	.023	1.169	.837	.163	.626	.476	.188
55–64	1.469	.491	.003	1.304	.831	.117	.693	.472	.142
Education (ref. high)									
Low	.130	.126	.305	1.038	.173	.000	.251	.134	.060
Average	.164	.100	.100	.410	.147	.005	.162	.104	.121

(continued)

Table A4 (continued)

Ref. well integrated	Home-rejecting			Host-rejecting			Home-leaning		
	B	Std. error	Sig.	B	Std. error	Sig.	B	Std. error	Sig.
Wave of emigration (ref. after 2011)									
1991-1999	-.163	.192	.396	-.590	.266	.027	-1.018	.198	.000
2000-2003	-.304	.169	.072	-1.113	.268	.000	-1.023	.178	.000
2004-2008	-.092	.128	.473	-.782	.179	.000	-.842	.130	.000
2009-2011	.060	.110	.583	-.533	.150	.000	-.535	.107	.000
Country (ref. other)									
The UK	.363	.402	.366	1.545	.728	.034	.806	.403	.045
Germany	.527	.414	.202	1.524	.739	.039	.509	.416	.220
Ireland	.566	.423	.181	1.736	.753	.021	.637	.432	.141
Norway	.563	.459	.220	1.174	.804	.144	.887	.458	.053
USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand	.698	.402	.083	1.043	.733	.155	1.019	.401	.011
Nordic countries, excluding Norway	.463	.430	.282	1.015	.775	.191	.585	.433	.177
NVS countries and Georgia	-.286	.428	.504	.227	.760	.765	.217	.429	.612
Southern European countries	-.801	.448	.074	-.986	.831	.236	-.805	.455	.077
Western European countries, except for UK, DE, IE	.287	.427	.502	1.004	.764	.189	.416	.429	.333
Eastern European countries (in the EU)	-.281	.466	.547	.831	.785	.290	-1.061	.487	.029
Aim of emigration (ref. other)									
Work	-.571	.161	.000	-1.042	.225	.000	.412	.188	.029
Studies	-.432	.179	.016	-.950	.259	.000	.410	.206	.047
Joining the family or starting a family	-.817	.194	.000	-1.240	.274	.000	.103	.211	.624
Current occupation (ref.other)									
Paid work	1.118	.327	.001	.161	.391	.681	1.056	.333	.002
Does not work and actively searches for a job	.727	.374	.052	-.350	.456	.442	.960	.373	.010
Studies	.734	.351	.036	-.510	.436	.243	.866	.356	.015
Taking care of children or other family members	.791	.351	.024	.059	.438	.894	1.643	.354	.000
Retired	.584	.597	.328	-.428	.854	.617	1.395	.580	.016

Reasons for emigrating (ref. Other reason, including traveling the world)										
Financial difficulties, including inability to pay loans	.401	.188	.033	.925	.315	.003	-.140	.186	.453	
Willingness to improve the quality of life, to live in a country with better social guarantees	.529	.187	.005	.739	.325	.023	-.122	.190	.521	
Opportunity to earn more abroad	.768	.217	.000	1.500	.347	.000	.503	.216	.020	
Development, career opportunities (including for children)	.162	.196	.409	1.075	.330	.001	.297	.187	.113	
Did not like the political processes and political environment in Latvia	.529	.188	.005	1.316	.319	.000	-.122	.196	.533	
Could not find a job in Latvia	.035	.273	.897	1.657	.368	.000	.443	.249	.075	
Marriage to a foreigner	-.514	.234	.028	.511	.389	.189	-.008	.217	.969	
Left together with the family or joined them	.479	.229	.037	1.211	.368	.001	.089	.225	.691	
Type of settlement (ref: Rural area, countryside)										
Capital city	.511	.154	.001	-.113	.213	.596	.002	.142	.989	
Other large city	.352	.162	.030	.486	.217	.025	-.269	.154	.081	
Other city or town	.346	.167	.039	-.044	.229	.849	-.324	.158	.040	
Changes in life satisfaction after emigration (ref. less satisfied)										
More satisfied	.155	.339	.646	-1.989	.295	.000	-1.356	.271	.000	
Equally satisfied	.108	.350	.758	-1.088	.303	.000	-.455	.279	.103	
Financial situation of the household (ref. very easily)										
With difficulty	.241	.158	.128	.311	.209	.137	.061	.156	.698	
Fairly easily	-.048	.111	.666	-.201	.171	.241	-.081	.116	.486	
Easily	-.147	.107	.172	.210	.162	.193	-.029	.112	.799	
Involvement in organisations (ref. Only in host country's organisations)										
Does not engage in any organisations	-1.101	.231	.000	-.599	.378	.114	.043	.183	.815	
Participates in both Latvian and host country's organisations	-.454	.172	.008	-.093	.248	.708	.130	.151	.389	
Only in Latvian organisations	.002	.110	.986	.023	.162	.888	.158	.116	.175	

Source: The author, based on *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey

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# Chapter 5

## Latvian Migrants in Foreign Labour Markets: Job Placement and Discrimination



Aivars Tabuns

### 5.1 Introduction

As part of the free movement of labour within the EU workers have the right to accept job offers and work in any member state, resulting in increasing intra-EU mobility. The imbalance of wages and quality of life can be singled out as the main driving force behind the recent wave of East-West migration. While there is great variety between East-West migrants in terms of their motives and intentions (Luthra et al. 2014), in *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey the majority (55%) of respondents who emigrated after Latvia regained independence named work as the main aim of that emigration. Of those, 21% wanted to study, 16% wanted to be reunited with their family or establish their own, while 8% listed some other reason for emigration. In order to find a job, international jobseekers often turn either to specialised or general private or state employment agencies, or use their private networks. To protect the rights of jobseekers various forms of regulation have been established by the authorities in both sending and receiving countries. Despite this, some choose to enlist the help of people or agencies providing job placement illegally. Žabko et al. (2018) provides detailed characteristics and classification of job placement intermediaries. Her analysis reveals that the avenues to employment are often complex and varied. However, there is little information on their actual impact on jobsearch outcomes for international jobseekers. Jobseekers often do not have sufficient information about job opportunities, working conditions abroad and their rights as workers (OSCE 2006), making them vulnerable to malpractice by employment agencies.

An additional cause for concern is possible exploitation by employers. The equal treatment of intra-EU migrants may be guaranteed in legal terms, yet evidence indicates subtle and more open forms of labour market discrimination. Despite previous

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studies showing that migrants from Eastern Central Europe sometimes perform better than natives in terms of employment (Huddleston et al. 2013), there is still a significant gap with regard to employment conditions and wages, job security and quality and other work-related factors (Eurostat 2011; Pichler 2011; Spreckelsen and Kaiser 2016). In combination with social stigmatisation and ‘othering’ of Eastern Central European migrants (Gilmartin and Migge 2015; Luthra et al. 2014; Söhn 2013), labour market discrimination can exacerbate problems with social integration as well (Bijl and Verweij 2012; Braun and Glöckner-Rist 2012; Shubin and Dickey 2013). The situation of Eastern European migrants in the labour market has been the focus of several studies (Gilmartin and Migge 2015; Johns 2013; Söhn 2013; Spreckelsen and Seeleib-Kaiser 2016), yet information is often incomplete, too general or lacking the perspective of migrants themselves.

This chapter focuses on the vulnerable position of Latvian workers in the labour markets of their destination countries, especially their exploitation by job placement intermediaries and the discrimination they face.

Following an overview of job placement agents and regulations, the process by which Latvian jobseekers find work abroad will be analysed, and, in particular, the role that service providers play in that process. The article considers the situation of Latvian migrant workers abroad and how that is linked with the use of certain types of intermediaries. Importantly, the chapter offers deep insight into how the migrants themselves experience their situation in workplaces abroad.

The chapter builds on data from *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey, taking advantage of both quantitative and qualitative data (see Mierîņa in this volume), as well as insights from previous surveys on the subject. The questionnaire used in the survey included questions about the way respondents found their first job and their experience of working with employment providers, as well as six different questions charting workplace discrimination (see Table 5.3).

## 5.2 Employment Service Providers and Regulations Protecting Workers

While analysing commodity prices and wages 250 years ago, Adam Smith concluded that ‘A man is, of all sorts of luggage, the most difficult to be transported’ (Smith 1776). Today the situation has changed, as illustrated by the intensification of migration processes. Nowadays it is easier for people to change their place of residence and thus find new job opportunities, while the organisation of labour migration is increasingly becoming a type of business. As employers are often unwilling to invest time and effort in the search for workers, they use an intermediary company that searches for the right personnel and ensures an adequate assessment of the motivation and operability of potential employees (Findlay et al. 2013). If, during the great emigration periods of previous centuries, these services were not supervised or regulated by the state, or selective constraints were applied by the state

to immigration rather than emigration, labour market regulation nowadays includes measures for both emigration and immigration, and an increasing amount of attention is paid by states to the protection of jobseekers' rights (Summerville 2004).

The European Union (EU) regulates not only the free movement of goods, services and capital, but also the free movement of the labour force. Workers have the right to accept job offers and move freely within the territory of the EU, to reside in any member state for employment and to stay in its territory after the completion of employment. At the same time, there is far less regulation relating to job placement services to other countries.

Many international organisations, such as the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations' agency for labour issues, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) have been focusing on the activities of private employment agencies.

The regulations of private employment agencies are based on the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) Convention (ILO 1997), which came into force in the year 2000 and has been ratified by 30 countries, including Lithuania (2004). However, Latvia and Estonia have not ratified the Convention. In 1997, the ILO also developed recommendations for the adoption of the Convention (ILO 1997). It continued to conduct regular surveys in this sector, and in 2007 developed a guide to regulating, monitoring and running private employment agencies (PrEA) (ILO 2007). Among other things, the document proposes self-regulatory tools for employment service providers, including professional codes of conduct and guidelines for co-operation between private agencies and public employment services.

One of the most important documents dealing with job placement abroad is the *Handbook on Establishing Effective Labour Migration Policies in Countries of Origin and Destination* (OSCE 2006). One of the chapters of the handbook analyses the policies of 'sending' countries, which are aimed at protecting emigrants. This document defines the national policy strategies, including the need for rigorous and regular monitoring of licensing and performance of private employment agencies, the co-operation of state institutions with the host countries of emigrants and the information and educational tools available to migrants – while simultaneously focusing on the speed and scale of the 'brain-drain'. Another guide (Directorate General for Internal Policies 2013) aims to develop recommendations to help private employment agencies comply with international human rights standards. The trends and challenges of migration are systematically analysed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

Emigrant protection issues are monitored by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). The organisation collects information on various national policies and provides potential emigrants with the necessary knowledge of working conditions in the new countries of residence. For instance, the project HEADSTART: Fostering Integration before Departure includes several EU countries (Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal and Slovakia) and has developed a manual for training centre workers that helps to prepare emigrants for living and working abroad (Pillinger 2015).

Although the employment service providers are mentioned in many policy documents, just a few detailed studies are devoted to this topic. The activity of private employment agencies is analysed in detail in a 2013 European Parliament study (European Commission 2013). It deals with documents regulating recruitment agencies both at the supra-national level (ILO, GATS, EU) and national level (Great Britain, Germany, Denmark, Belgium, Italy and Poland), showing that approaches differ to the regulation and supervision of private employment agencies in various countries (Pijpers 2010; van Liemt 2013).

In a 3-year study of the migrant recruitment strategies of the UK's private recruitment agencies between 2005 and 2008, Chris Forde and Robert MacKenzie interviewed both service providers and recipients (Forde and MacKenzie 2010) and identified three employment strategies.

The first was classified as a business case, and focused solely on the fulfilment of the needs of employers. The second approach was labelled as 'minimal compliance' or the 'penalty avoidance' approach. Here, agencies complied with the requirements of the employers, the health and safety of the workforce and the regulatory requirements of labour law. The third approach was labelled the 'social justice approach' – companies following this strategy intended to represent the needs of emigrants in full (MacKenzie and Forde 2008).

An extended list of the most common violations by recruitment agencies was presented in the legislative initiatives' submission in the House of Commons by the British Member of Parliament Andrew Miller (Keter 2007). The document indicated that employment relationships were often unfairly terminated and that immigrants and migrants were often exposed to psychological intimidation and other forms of violence, such as bullying and harassment.

An extensive list of typical violations at the workplace by employers has been compiled by British trade unions (Anderson et al. 2007; Clark 2004; Migrant Workers Agency 2007), including lower salaries than were originally promised, unfair wage deductions or penalties, paying overtime at the rate of basic hours, jobs without a signed contract and breaks that were shorter than specified.

In Latvia, according to State Employment Agency (NVA 2015) data, 108 companies had employment service licenses on 14 April 2015, and about half of the companies registered in Latvia had a license for work placement abroad, including 39 in Germany, 20 in Britain, 10 in Norway, 10 in the Netherlands, 8 in Ireland and 5 in Russia. Employment opportunities were offered to jobseekers in other countries as well, but by a significantly smaller number of companies.

However, a multi-faceted study conducted between 2014 and 2015 by the Baltic Institute of Social Sciences (BISS) in collaboration with the University of Oslo Regional Studies Institute reveals that, despite the substantial number of licenses issued by the State Employment Agency, the Latvian work placement companies are weak in Norway. It is most common for Latvians to search for a job through personal contacts, as they have low levels of trust in advertisements and job placement intermediaries (Žabko 2015).

The State Employment Agency (SEA) and the Consumer Rights Protection Centre (CRPC) ensures oversight of these companies. In 2010, the SEA and the

CRPC conducted a survey in which they detected violations in the activities of several work placement service providers, and applied administrative sanctions to the businesses for unfair commercial practices (NVA, PTAC 2010). After the CRPC evaluated the commercial practices of several work placement providers, it banned a number of companies from providing information about their offers and withdrew the licenses of six businesses. The authors of the aforementioned study (Žabko 2015) indicate that consumers were often provided with a misleading impression that the company could legitimately provide services, when in fact it did not have a license to do that.

The Latvian media often reports on rogue service providers which do not fulfil their agreements with jobseekers. Warnings and recommendations are regularly published on how to avoid dishonest service providers. However, information about Latvian employment providers and the quality of their services is unsystematic, and qualitative methods are most frequently used in sociological surveys on the subject.

Frequently detected fraud methods listed by the SEA (NVA 2015) include:

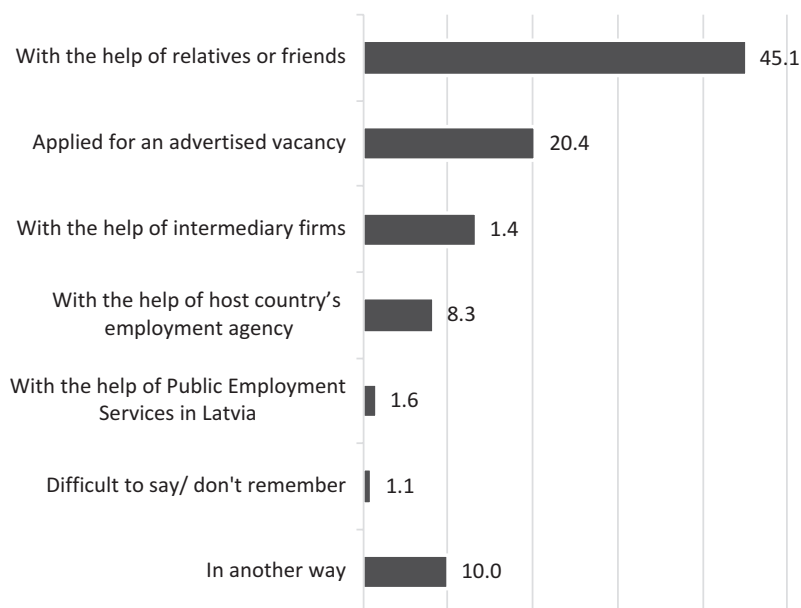
- The jobseeker does not receive a contract of work placement services;
- They are not informed about training fees or that they will have to repay training expenses on leaving;
- They are offered a different, lower paid job or their work has been terminated;
- They are offered another, lower paid job or are refused work;
- They are offered lower standard or more expensive housing conditions;
- They are presented with additional working conditions;
- They are faced with an unjustified claim that they 'owe' their employer money – and this debt is deducted from their salary;
- Employment service providers do not respond to the jobseeker's complaints.

Jobseekers experiencing difficulties with employment contacts can report violations of the license to the SEA.

### **5.3 Migrants' Experiences with Employment Service Providers**

The analysis of job seeking experiences is based on the answers of those respondents (in total 6171 respondents) who indicated that their main goal of emigration was to work abroad and who answered the question relating to how they found their first job abroad. In the analysis of the treatment of workers at their workplace, only those who emigrated after 1991 i.e., after Latvia regained independence, were included – regardless of how they found that job.

The results show that almost half of the respondents found their first paid job in the host country with the help of relatives or friends (45%) (Fig. 5.1). The second most common way of finding work was by applying for competitions or advertisements (20%). The third method, of using the services of employment agencies or intermedi-



**Fig. 5.1** How did the respondent find a job abroad? (%) (Source: The author, based on *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey)

aries, accounted for 13% of jobseekers while the rest were helped by employment agencies in the host countries (8.3%) or found work in another way (10%).

The paid services of intermediaries were used more often by respondents living in small towns or in the countryside, but less often by those living in Riga (15% and 10% respectively). They were equally popular among men and women, as well as people of different ages and levels of education. However, the data shows that the services of intermediary firms were used most often by those who emigrated between 2000 and 2003 (22%) and has been decreasing since, falling to 11% among those who emigrated in 2011 or later.

It is important to point out that in various countries the proportions between the first three ways of finding work differed considerably (see Table 5.1). Moreover, the use of intermediary services differed quite significantly in different emigration waves.

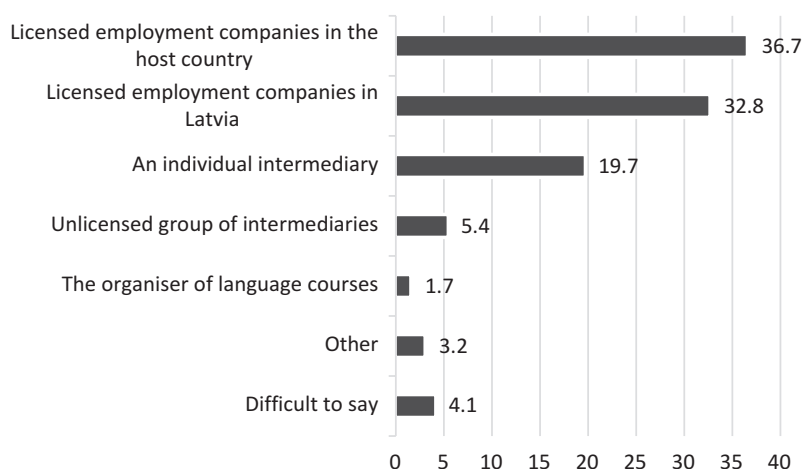
The survey also focused on the type of employment intermediaries and how successfully they operated. Among respondents whose main aim of leaving was to work abroad and who used paid intermediaries, 37% tried to find a job with the help of the potential host country's employment firms (HCEF) while 33% used the services of Latvia's employment firms (LVEF). Around 20% of respondents used individual intermediaries and 5% went to unlicensed intermediary groups (Fig. 5.2).

The services of licensed employment companies in Latvia (LVEF) were used mostly by Latvian emigrants living in Ireland, Norway and Cyprus, while those in

**Table 5.1** Way of finding the first job for respondents from different countries (%)

State	Applied for competitions or advertisements	With the help of relatives or friends	With the help of intermediary firms
USA	23.6	40.2	12.5
Austria	31.8	44.5	11.9
Belgium	35.3	41.7	6.3
Denmark	12.5	58.5	11.4
Ireland	18.8	60.6	9.5
UK	14.2	44.2	18.4
The Netherlands	15.4	43.2	23.4
Norway	16.6	58.6	11.3
Finland	19.7	41.2	9.1
Germany	20.6	51.2	9.2
Sweden	21.1	52.2	6.8

Source: The author, based on *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey

**Fig. 5.2** The type of paid job placement services used (%) (Source: The author, based on *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey)

Denmark, Sweden, Belgium and the Netherlands used the services of the host country. Latvian migrants in Italy and France engaged individual intermediaries.

The survey data indicates that the host country's recruitment company (HCEF) services were chosen comparatively more often by those from cities, but those living in the countryside at the time used the services of Latvian companies (LVEF). HCEF services were chosen more often by younger respondents (15–24 years), and – interestingly enough – by managers and unskilled workers alike. Older people and Russians more often chose to use individual intermediaries while unskilled workers used the services of unregistered intermediary firms.



When answering survey questions evaluating the services of firms or intermediaries, more than two thirds (72%) of respondents who had used these services chose the answer 'firms or intermediaries fully fulfilled their obligations'. Eleven percent of respondents indicated that the work differed substantially from what was promised; 3% thought they were not offered anything acceptable and 7% believed it was a fraud. Several respondents indicated they did not have a contract on departure as they had relied on mutual agreements.

When asked which contract clauses were not fulfilled or only partly fulfilled, the respondents most often indicated non-compliance on job conditions (58%), working hours or work schedule (47%) and payment (42%). Less frequently, respondents mentioned inadequate living conditions (32%), inadequate social security or protection and high rents for housing (26%). Several respondents pointed out that quite soon after arrival they refused the intermediary services because they were offered a completely different job, not the job that was initially promised.

A common experience among migrant workers was that promises were broken. Among situations mentioned by respondents were that the work promised was not there, contracts were not fulfilled or there was no work at all. Specific complaints included:

- We ended up in another city and at another factory;
- I found myself on the street;
- We were dropped off [e.g., in Northampton Park] and abandoned there;
- Although the agreement was for 3 months, after just 2 weeks the direct employer ended the job;
- We were charged more than was initially quoted for work permits and travel expenses;
- After the contract finished we were not paid the money we were owed; i.e. we were 'ripped off'.

Similar examples were mentioned in *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* qualitative interviews. Intermediary companies were frequently described as fraudsters by jobseekers, especially those over 55 and those living in the capital city.

Respondent from the UK who left Latvia in 2011 shared:

My husband flew to London through one Riga firm. As with many of our countrymen, he was promised a job in a restaurant as a cook's assistant. When he went there, of course, that firm says they have no jobs.

Jobseekers who replied to advertisements online were also often cheated as this respondent who left Latvia for Germany in 2009:

We saw an advert asking for two gardeners, cleaners and a yardman. Now I understand I was naive but the contact was a Latvian so we contacted him. Everything seemed fine at first but it turned out differently. When I got out of the bus at the [airport] terminal, I was called and told to wait. And I'm still waiting! I haven't heard anything from that man. Two more men were with me. They turned around and went back to Latvia by bus that evening.

Of those jobseekers who used employment agencies in Latvia, 73% found a job abroad while 56% of potential migrants using agencies in the host country found work. Half the respondents who used individual intermediaries secured a job abroad, while only 33% of respondents using unlicensed firms were successful in finding employment. Overall about 60% of respondents using intermediaries found work abroad.

## 5.4 Treatment of Migrant Workers in the Workplace

The results of *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey show that 35% of Latvian migrant workers encountered some form of discrimination or unfair treatment in their workplace. The most common form of unfair treatment mentioned by 18% of respondents was that they were paid less than workers from the host nation for similar work. Such a situation was most widespread in Germany and Nordic countries. Here, 29% of Latvian workers made this complaint (Table 5.2).

Being given unpleasant and/or unprofitable tasks more frequently than host nation colleagues was mentioned by 14% of Latvian migrants, who also complained they experienced more difficulty negotiating suitable work schedules and shift patterns. These issues were mentioned most by Latvian workers in Germany and Southern Europe. Twelve percent said they were expected to meet tougher requirements with respect to work discipline or productivity than host nation colleagues: most often those working in Eastern Europe, the UK and Ireland. One can conclude that both the frequency and character of discrimination varied from country to country.

At the time of the survey most Latvian workers abroad (85%) had a permanent contract with their employer. Of those who did not, 8% had a verbal agreement while 4% did not have a direct agreement with the employer, but a written contract with a temporary work agency (Fig. 5.3). Verbal agreements were most common in the construction industry (22% of migrant construction workers had verbal agreements), while contracts with temporary work agencies were most common in manufacturing (9% of migrant workers in this field had such contracts).

Regarding national insurance or social security payments 9% of the Latvian migrant workers knew that the employer did not make them on their behalf, while 8% were not sure these payments were made. Employers in the construction sector were most likely not to make social security payments, according to the respondents. Almost one in five (19%) said they felt contributions were not made, 7% were not sure. Those working in IT also felt the same way: 11% knew that social security contributions were not made while 7% were not sure.

Table 5.2 Encountering unfair treatment at the workplace (%)

	All countries	UK	Germany	Ireland	USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand	Nordic countries	CIS countries + Georgia	Southern European countries	Western European countries, excluding UK, Ireland and Germany	Eastern European countries (in the EU)	Other countries
You are given unpleasant and/or unprofitable tasks more frequently than host nation colleagues (HNCs)	14.5	16.0	19.3	14.5	11.4	16.2	3.5	18.7	13.6	11.1	15.7
You find it harder than HNCs to negotiate a suitable timetable for your work	12.3	12.7	17.5	13.7	9.9	12.2	3.5	16.3	11.7	11.3	15.3
You are expected to meet tougher requirements with respect to work discipline or productivity than HNCs	12.4	15.8	10.6	15.3	7.1	12.6	4.6	14.2	11.2	17.0	14.3

You are always forced to take your annual leave during 'off season'	10.4	11.1	14.7	17.9	3.7	15.4	5.0	8.0	8.9	10.4	3.5
You are paid less than HNCs for similar work	17.8	14.5	28.9	19.8	15.0	28.6	4.3	19.5	26.0	11.9	14.7
You face other types of unequal treatment	10.6	12.6	10.6	15.3	5.3	13.1	6.2	5.1	12.4	16.1	3.4

Source: The author, based on *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey



**Fig. 5.3** Type of contract at workplace (%) (Source: The author, based on *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey)

## 5.5 Discrimination Against Latvian Migrant Workers Abroad

In order to summarise the information about how widespread cases of discrimination were for the Latvian diaspora, an index of discrimination was calculated on a scale from 0 to 5, where 0 means the respondent has not encountered any form of unfair treatment and 5 means they have encountered all measured forms of unfair treatment.

As can be seen in Table 5.3., Latvian workers were most likely to face unfair treatment in the UAE, the Netherlands, Denmark, Greece, Finland and Germany. Such cases were also relatively common in Ireland, Sweden, Switzerland, Iceland and Lithuania. The data showed that Nordic and Western European countries had the highest scores of unfair treatment reported by migrants themselves.

The analysis of demographic groups revealed that the Latvian migrants more likely to face discrimination at work were those who had lived abroad for less than 2 years, who lived in towns or rural areas rather than the capital city; were skilled and unskilled workers as opposed to managers and professionals and were either young people under 24 years of age or those above 65 (Fig. 5.4).

Overall, the index of discrimination was highest in agriculture, forestry or fisheries, manufacturing or energy, construction, transport or storage services (Table 5.4). Those in sales, catering or the hospitality sectors faced less frequent discrimination. It is important to note that unfair treatment was most often encountered in those companies abroad that were registered in Latvia. One can conclude that these companies were trying to increase their competitiveness by attracting a cheaper workforce from Latvia. This conclusion is in line with previous findings (Mieriņa 2016)

**Table 5.3** Encountering unfair treatment at the work place in various countries

	Index of discrimination	Number of respondents (unweighted)		Index of discrimination	Number of respondents (unweighted)
UK	.77	4952	Estonia	.29	107
Germany	.97	1475	Iceland	.91	92
Ireland	.91	1223	Cyprus	.71	76
Norway	.87	838	Luxembourg	.20	70
USA	.50	802	Lithuania	.94	60
Sweden	.90	569	Greece	1.19	58
Denmark	1.17	471	Czech Republic	.40	52
The Netherlands	1.28	399	UAE	1.53	48
Russia	.28	370	Turkey	.51	42
Belgium	.46	270	Ukraine	.33	41
Canada	.35	233	Portugal	.56	40
Finland	1.12	225	Belarus	.08	39
France	.42	208	Israel	.78	36
Austria	.58	203	Poland	.62	34
Spain	.46	172	China	.00	34
Italy	.71	161	China	.15	28
Australia	.49	157	New Zealand	.23	26
Switzerland	.91	133	Malta	.17	22

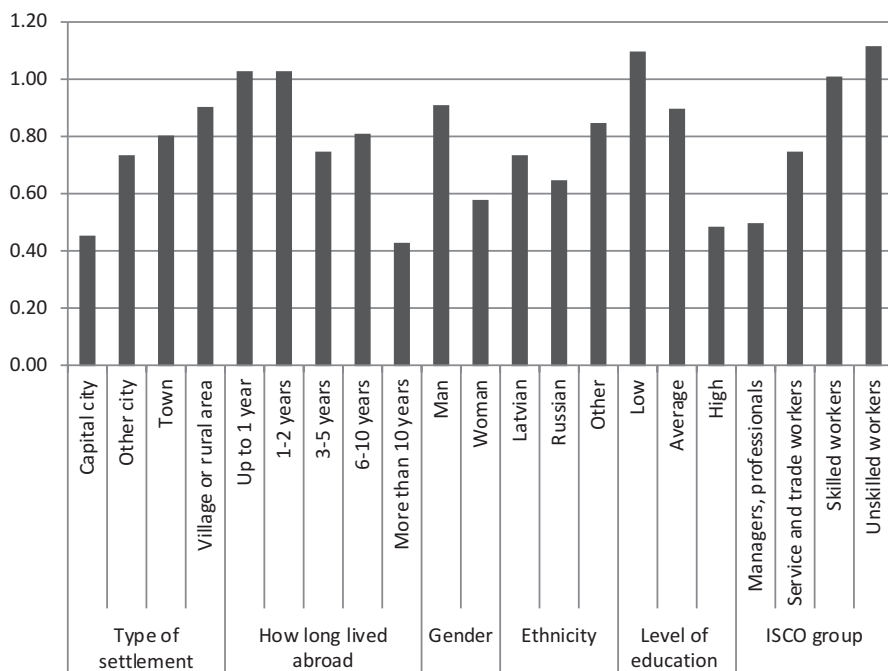
Discrimination index on a scale from 0 to 5

Source: The author, based on *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey

that diaspora workers evaluate the attitude of employers abroad as being better than employers in Latvia. Cases of discrimination were more common among those with only a verbal agreement or a temporary contract with an employment agency. Moreover, they were more common in situations when the worker had only a short-term contract, temporary contract or a contract for completing a specific task (up to 1 year).

If we look at discrimination scores depending on the use of the services of job placement intermediaries, one can conclude that those who did use such services have, on average, been subject to more situations of discrimination at the workplace (Sig.<0.001), particularly those who used the services of unlicensed groups of intermediaries (Fig. 5.5). Reducing the use of such services can be expected to have a positive impact on the labour market situation of migrants in general.

Finally, the process of having experienced discrimination can affect migrants' identification with the host country's inhabitants as well as their plans to return to Latvia (Sig.<0.001) (Table 5.5).



**Fig. 5.4** Experience of discrimination in various demographic groups (%) (Source: The author, based on *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey. Note: Discrimination index on a scale from 0 to 5)

## 5.6 Conclusions

While various national and international employment policy documents have been developed with the aim of protecting the rights of mobile citizens in the EU, emigrants continue to encounter violations of their labour rights. They are often poorly informed about their rights and the specifics of the types of contracts with employment agencies and employers abroad. The analysis shows that emigrants from different countries face similar problems. Co-operation between national authorities should thus be promoted.

The data collected as part of *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* project showed that almost a fifth of migrant workers who used the services of intermediary job placement firms had experienced unfair treatment at the hands of these service providers. Although the respondents who emigrated after 2011 indicated such cases less frequently, the fact that 11% of emigrants in the last wave (2011+) of emigration claimed that ‘the work differed substantially from the job promised’ and 7% thought that ‘it was a fraud’ means the national authorities do not control the employment activities of firms and the quality of the services provided sufficiently or carefully enough.

**Table 5.4** Experience of discrimination depending on the sector of employment and the type of contract (%)

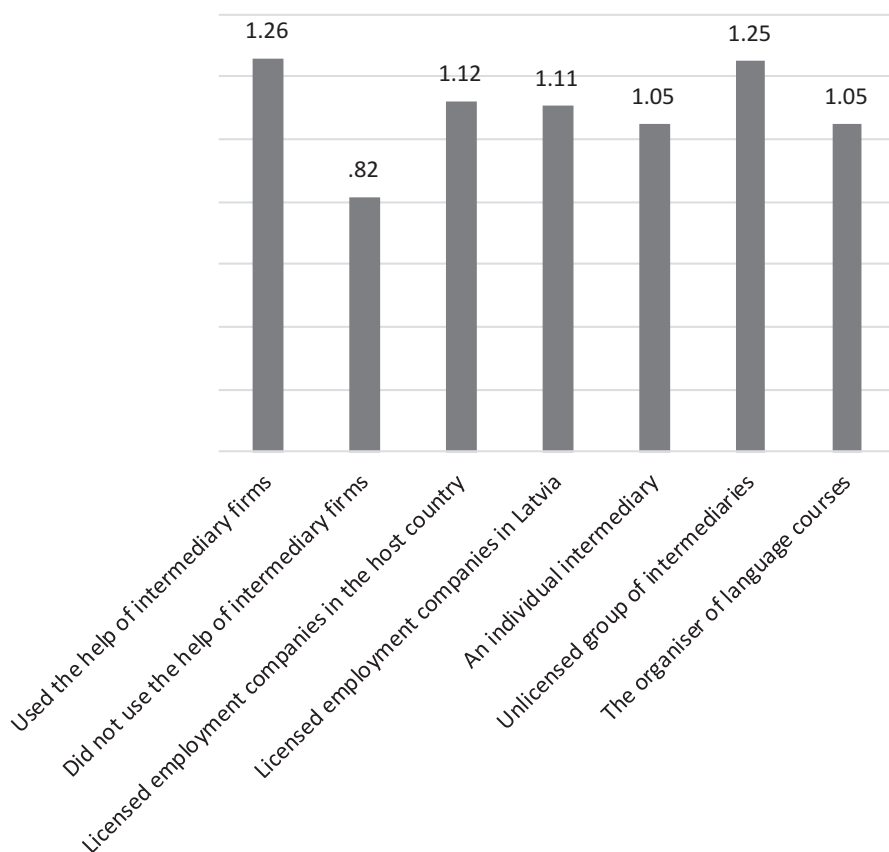
Sector of employment	Agriculture, forestry or fisheries	1.04
	Manufacturing or energy	.93
	Construction	1.02
	Sales, catering or hospitality	.75
	Transport or storage	.97
	Information and communication services	.47
	Services in finance, insurance, research, administration or real estate	.48
	Government and national defence; national insurance/social security	.22
	Education	.40
	Healthcare and social services	.52
	Other	.65
	Difficult to say	.56
Type of company	A company registered in Latvia	1.38
	A company registered in another country	.74
	A government/municipal institution or a non-profit organisation in the country of residence	.63
	A government/municipal institution or a non-profit organisation of Latvia	.27
	An international organisation	.58
	Difficult to say	.91
Type of contract	Written contract	.67
	Verbal agreement along with a written description of job duties	.70
	Verbal agreement only	1.34
	No direct agreement with the employer; a written contract with a temporary work agency	1.43
	Don't want to answer	.69
Length of contract	Permanent (no fixed end date)	.67
	Currently in a probation period	.81
	Temporary or fixed-term, or for the performance of a particular task or tasks (for less than a year)	1.28
	Temporary or fixed-term, or for the performance of a particular task or tasks (for more than 1 year)	.55
	Don't want to answer	.73

Source: The author, based on *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey

Discrimination index on a scale from 0 to 5

One safeguard could be the introduction of standardised contracts, to be developed and implemented by these agencies. Such a contract would define the rights and responsibilities of both agencies and employees, as well as identifying ways of solving disagreements and sanctioning procedures. Contract registration procedures and control procedures should be agreed and set in law, with the understanding that failure to conclude such an agreement would serve as a basis for revoking the agency's license.





**Fig. 5.5** Discrimination depending on the type of paid job placement services used (Source: The author, based on *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey. Note: Discrimination index on a scale from 0 to 5)

According to *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey, 15% of Latvian migrant workers did not have a written employment contract with the employer at the time it was conducted, and for 17% of them the employer did not or probably did not make social security contributions. One can conclude that around one in six Latvian workers in the migrant labour market are in a precarious and vulnerable position. Thirty-five percent have encountered unequal, discriminatory attitude at their workplace. Interestingly, Nordic and Western European countries had the highest scores of discrimination reported by migrants themselves, probably attesting to the subjective nature of feeling that they were treated unfairly compared to their host nation colleagues. Discrimination hinders migrants' identification with the host country's inhabitants and fuels their willingness to return home.

The results of this study suggest that in order to reduce discrimination in the workplace, it is important to reduce the shadow economy and to improve the information available to migrant workers about their rights. Particular focus should be

**Table 5.5** Return migration plans, identification with the inhabitants of the host country, and experience with discrimination (%)

		Discrimination score
Plans to move back to Latvia permanently within the next 6 months	Plans to return	1.17
	Depends on circumstances	0.86
	Does not plan to return	0.52
Identification with people living in the host country	I feel strongly that I belong	0.3
	I tend to feel that I belong	0.4
	I neither feel I belong nor do I feel I do not belong	0.8
	I tend to feel that I do not belong	0.9
	I feel strongly that I do not belong	1.6

Source: The author, based on *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey  
Discrimination index on a scale from 0 to 5

given to illegal service providers and work on temporary contracts or contracts with an employment agency, especially highlighting the situation in certain problematic employment sectors.

For future studies, it would be productive to gather information about contract enforcement by new employers, about additional requirements, deductions and requests for involuntary overtime. It would be useful to conduct analysis of complaints received by the CRPC and SEA on dishonest intermediaries, to investigate unlicensed employment service providers and to inform job seekers about possible fraudulent practices so that the rights of migrant workers can be better protected.

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**Part II**  
**Case Studies on Transnational and**  
**National Belonging of Migrants**

# Chapter 6

## Latvian Migrants in Great Britain: ‘The Great Departure’, Transnational Identity and Long Distance Belonging



Mārtiņš Kaprāns

### 6.1 Introduction

*Only here did I come to understand that I love Latvia. Oh, yes! I live in Latvia, I am a Latvian, I have the sea, the forest, mushrooms and berries, and here I knew that it is my motherland, and the motherland is not to blame for what is happening there, because my motherland will always be my motherland. I can live anywhere. [Māra, 60, living in Peterborough]*

The analysis, argument and search for reasons generated by the issue of emigration over the past decade in Latvia has produced a series of competing explanations for this phenomenon in the public discourse, and they have replaced each other as time has passed. Initial accusations of betrayal and cowardice toward emigrants have changed into a pragmatic ‘exit strategy’ and claims that Latvian migrants were ‘shameful losers’ have turned into the belief that in fact, these people went to seek and create their own fortune. Along with this discursive shift however, the ‘Great Departure’, as it has been dubbed in the parlance of the Latvian media, has constantly signalled a perceptible level of national anxiety, as reflected in the political, media and scholarly agendas. This concern has echoed Johansen’s (1997, p. 171) idea that at the subjective level, ‘the nation is experienced as a magnified version of the family and the circle of close friends. Its territory is our ‘home’; its people marked by a common ‘character’ much like the members of a family; its past is a ‘heritage’ passed down by our ‘forefathers’’. At this metaphorical and affective level, Latvian anxiety about emigrants seems quite natural, as emigration endangers the ‘family hearth’. At the same time however, emigration also creates similarly

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upsetting emotions in the migrants themselves, because their symbolic baggage often contains nothing but uncertainty about their future – and whatever they have carried with them from their past.

Great Britain has become the main destination for new Latvian migrants, with some estimates suggesting that as many as 100,000 people from Latvia are living there (Beriņa-Apsīte 2013; Goldmanis 2015; Hazans 2011). Most moved to Britain during the past decade, particularly during the economic recession between 2008 and 2010. There are substantial groups of Latvian migrants concentrated in UK towns like Bradford, Peterborough, Northampton and Leicester but the community is nevertheless rather scattered and socially stratified along socio-economic lines (see McCollum et al. 2017).

Acknowledging significant differences between various segments of Latvian migrants in the UK, it is important not to ignore the unifying role of a kin state. In fact, the will to practice different forms of ‘belonging to Latvia’ rather than adaptation prospects to a host country binds Latvian migrants in the UK together as an imagined community. That is, Latvian migrants unintentionally stick together as a community of diasporic practices vis-à-vis their kin state. In other words, such a community of practice has a joint enterprise, mutual engagement and shared repertoire. However, as Wenger (1998, p. 77) argues, not just unity, but also disagreements, challenges and competition may be an essential component of such communities; therefore ‘a community of practice is neither a haven of togetherness nor an island insulated from political and social relations’. Moreover, the Brexit vote – while increasing ontological anxiety among Latvian migrants – has laid the ground for practices strengthening rather weakening the awareness of community.

Researchers have so far focused on structural analysis of Latvian migrants in Great Britain (Beriņa-Apsīte 2013), their contacts with friends and family members (King and Lulle 2015) and relations with their homeland and new host country within specific groups, such as highly qualified migrants (King et al. 2014), Russian-speaking migrants (Lulle and Hobeina 2017) and older female Latvian migrants (Lulle and King 2016). These studies have focused on the transnational, assimilation-related and return migration dimensions, often leaving aside more comprehensive descriptions and explanations of how rank and file Latvian migrants identify with their country of origin. To fill the empirical gap, this article sets out to explore migrant practices and the discourses of belonging. In particular, the author puts forward the argument that whilst living in Great Britain, migrants from Latvia have created a new meaning for the concept of ethno-cultural belonging. At the same time however, satisfaction with their living conditions and the process of embedding in the multi-cultural British environment, together with their progress along that journey, have simultaneously facilitated an identification with their homeland as well, thus strengthening alternative forms of long distance belonging.

## 6.2 Long Distance Belonging to Kin State

Belonging to a group is an analytical category that social scientists often translate into essentialist language. This creates a tendency to treat groups as substantial entities, or what Brubaker (2004) has called 'groupism'. This constructivist perspective challenges research that defines categories of 'nation' or 'diaspora' as *sui generis* or specific realities, and overlooks practices and discourses which actually elicit a sense of 'group' and 'belonging' to a group.

Certainly, the sense of long distance belonging to the country of origin manifests as a set of politically idiomatic claims and practices that strengthen ideas among migrants about the nation as the central axis of their identity. Students of nationhood usually contrast two prototypes: ethno-cultural and civic-territorial nationhood. The ethno-cultural approach is based on the idea that a nation is made of ethnic bloodlines, while the civic approach believes that the main foundation for identification is belonging to a specific territory and embracing a shared set of values rather than being part of an ethnic group. There are many possible ideological variations in these prototypes of nationhood, but the primary focus is on justifying solidarity and a sense of collective belonging, as well as defining the nation's symbolic boundaries. In this process of definition, ethno-cultural and civic interpretations of nationhood can be both exclusive and inclusive.

The diaspora as a framework for long distance belonging is first and foremost also a category of practice that is used so that migrants, members of the political elite and other groups in society can 'make claims, to articulate projects, to formulate expectations, to mobilise energies, to appeal to loyalties' (Brubaker 2006, p. 12). A decisive component of diasporic practices is orientation to a kin state that, among other things, prompts and reinforces the sense of long distance belonging. This sense can be triggered through a discourse which frames the migrants' intentions vis-à-vis the kin state and through a chosen acculturation strategy toward a host society (see van Oudenhoven et al. 2001). Likewise, the policies of the country of residence and country of origin also play a crucial role in shaping long distance belonging (Waterbury 2010).

Politically, belonging to a kin state often boils down to the long distance nationalism that became a mass phenomenon in the late nineteenth century, when the United States received a flood of European migrants (Anderson 1992; Glick Schiller 2005). The behaviour of the new immigrants was manifested not just as a sense of losing one's motherland and nostalgia, but also as a desire to maintain links with the country of origin and its culture. Long distance nationalism presumes that political motivations are the main reason why migrants maintain relationships with their countries of origin. Categorical and radical positions often creep into such relationships, because when individuals are away from their country, they do not have to accept the everyday compromises that are important for the residents of the country of origin. Anderson (1992, p. 12) has argued that there are even certain parallels between long distance nationalists and extremists, because 'they live their real politics long distance, without accountability'.



However, many manifestations of long distance belonging can be spotted only if we look at the migrants' practices beyond political relationships with a kin state and explore other socially demarcating and interactive fields where, in Bourdieuan terms (Bourdieu 1990), new stratification and power relations vis-à-vis a kin state are produced. In fact, the traditions and cultural artefacts of the country of origin often become more important practices of identification than political participation. Conversi (2012, p. 1366) argues that the most radical migrants tend to represent specifically that part of the diaspora that is de-traditionalised, alienated from its motherland and assimilated in the country of residence. The sense of a common culture does not always mean ethnic self-isolation of the diaspora. That is, diasporic cultural practices ultimately often mean a dialogue with the values, behavioural patterns and historical heritage of the land of residence. This places long distance belonging into the web of transnational relations.

Arguably, the transnational dimension of long distance belonging is more pronounced among the first generation of immigrants who are more likely to maintain strong ties with the country of origin but simultaneously feel an attachment to their host country. However, transnationalism is a conditional phenomenon that may appear in one practice of long distance belonging but be absent in another. By exploring the relation between mobility and local anchorage, Dahinden (2010) has outlined various ideal types of transnational relations that help illustrate the multi-faceted nature of the migrants' transnational identity. Furthermore, through the example of Armenian migrants in Switzerland, Dahinden (2010, pp. 69–67) shows that those who nominally identify with the same ethno-cultural group can be associated with different types of transnational identity, e.g. localised diasporic transnationals or transnational outsiders.

In Latvian history, the most vivid example of politically motivated long distance belonging is the emigrant community established in Western countries after World War II. According to Appadurai (1996, p. 6), this community can be described as a 'diaspora of terror' because it emerged under dramatic and insecure circumstances. Emigrant Latvians used lobbying, picketing and publications to influence the political elite in their countries of residence and to remind the international community about the Soviet occupation of their homeland. The emigrant Latvians though were a fairly structured community, in which, over a longer period of time, differences in attitudes toward the homeland and the host country became more apparent. This also changed the nature of long distance belonging (Muižnieks 2009). Namely, after the collapse of the USSR Latvia experienced different migration practices, with political motivations being replaced by economic ones. After the restoration of Latvia's independence, the 'diaspora of terror' lost its legitimacy while new emigrants learned a different solidarity, that is described by Appadurai as a 'diaspora of hope' – of those seeking work and better socio-economic conditions in their lives. For Latvians living abroad, this changed the relationship with their country of origin. Relationships with the symbolic 'family' and 'home' not only changed but became branched, echoing Morley's (2000, p. 44) reflection that 'the issue of who can (literally) afford to sentimentalise the idea of the home, and the extent to which this can be done, will vary depending on socio-cultural and economic circumstances'.

During the transition period in Latvia in the 1990s, nationalism maintained an important ideological role in the formation of the Latvian nation. The definition of national consciousness and identity was based also on the ideas and considerations of emigrant Latvians who lived in exile before the collapse of the USSR. In post-Soviet Latvia, ethno-cultural nationalism helped to mobilise those residents who identified themselves with the indigenous nation of Latvians, simultaneously creating obstacles of identification for Russians and other ethnic minorities who were assimilated into the Russian-speaking environment during the Soviet era. Although Latvia's constitution speaks to a concept of *nation* ('*tauta*'), post-Soviet nationalism in Latvia was based on ethno-cultural rather than civic-territorial practices and discourses of nationhood, and these, albeit to a lesser extent, still dominate among Latvians.

This ethno-cultural belonging to the nation on the one hand, and the typically low level of trust of government institutions, low level of civic activity and declining political participation among Latvians on the other (see Ijabs 2014; Miežaine and Šimane 2005) have served to create controversial pre-requisites for long distance belonging among young migrants. In other words, it has generated what seem to be two equally powerful emotions among young migrants: a strong sense of belonging and yet also a desire to distance themselves from their country of origin.

### 6.3 Methodology

The empirical material of this article is based on two data sets: *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey (see Mieriņa in this volume), and 20 semi-structured qualitative interviews. There were 4928 respondents from Great Britain who took part in *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey. This chapter, however, only focuses on the data subset that applies to Latvian migrants who travelled to Great Britain after 1991 ( $n = 4287$ ). Descriptive analysis of the survey data is based on the SPSS data analysis programme.

The interviews with Latvian migrants in Great Britain were conducted in 2014, 2015 and 2018. The author interviewed migrants of various generations who had lived in the UK for no less than 3 years. The respondents lived in southern and central parts of Great Britain – Brighton, London, Huntingdon, Peterborough and Nottingham. The average length of interview was 90 min. Analysis of transcripts from the interviews was based on the NVivo qualitative analysis programme. The names of all interviewees in this chapter have been changed to protect their anonymity, though their true ages and places of residence at the time of the interview are stated.

Contextual information for the chapter also includes participant observation of the celebration of Latvian Independence Day on November 15, 2014 in Peterborough and on November 18 in London. It should however be emphasised that at the qualitative level the article focuses mostly on ethnic Latvian migrants in

Great Britain, without analysing the long distance belonging of Latvia's Russian-speaking migrants.<sup>1</sup>

The multifaceted data reveal structural parameters that define overlapping social fields or contexts where long distance belonging is meaningfully practiced in various ways. The further analysis of empirical data is organised so as to discuss the three most salient analytical contexts of long distance belonging among Latvian migrants: the ethno-cultural, political and social dimensions.

## 6.4 The Ethno-cultural Context

Cultural resources are a part of everyday consciousness, and people do not usually try to reflect that in discursive terms. As Morley (2000, p. 39) aptly puts it, 'the sense of national belonging is often inscribed in the taken-for-granted practices of everyday life – how you buy stamps in France as opposed to Poland; how you order a burger in Amsterdam as opposed to New York'. These self-evident routines cultivate a sense of national belonging and allow people to trust one another, thus making the activities of others more predictable. Giddens (1991, pp. 35–69) has argued that when such routines disappear or are threatened by other cultures, the individual's sense of ontological insecurity increases. That means that the influence of an alien or competing culture on this everyday level is of existential importance for migrants and for people in the nation-state migrants move to.

Latvian culture is an attractive factor that often makes Latvian emigrants in the UK view their country of origin in a positive light. For the purposes of this paper, the concept of culture includes explicit traditions and artefacts, as well as a certain set of values and behaviours which emigrants associate with Latvia and Latvians. References to Latvian culture as an important resource for identity are made quite often by Latvian emigrants in the stories they tell. In interviews, they admit that after a longer period of time living abroad, they have found additional motivation for being interested in Latvian culture and history. As one Latvian emigrant in Ireland admitted in previous research, only in Ireland did she 'become a Latvian' (Kēšāne 2011, p. 68). There are various reasons why the salience of Latvian culture increases. On one hand, the awareness of Latvian culture becomes a part of everyday lives, with Latvian migrants in Great Britain becoming involved in organised and co-ordinated cultural practices. This means taking part in folk dance groups, choirs and other ethno-cultural activities, where women are found more often than men. For instance, 37 year old Baiba is active in the social life of Latvians in Peterborough, and says this has deepened her interest in Latvian ornaments and ethnographic traditions, because 'here you cannot touch such things'.

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<sup>1</sup>For more about Russian-speaking migrants from Latvia in Great Britain, see the chapter by Jurkāne-Hobeina in this book, as well as King et al. (2014, pp. 29–31) and Lulle and Jurkāne-Hobeina (2017).

In Latvia you have everything – folk dance groups, choirs and everything else, but then you come here, and there is nothing. (...) In truth, this culture is very important to me, and when I lived in Latvia ... well, it was not as important for me as when I lived abroad. Look [pointing to her bracelet] – here are all of these ornaments, and now I know what they mean.

Involvement in amateur groups helps form closer links to cultural events in Latvia, particularly ones such as the Latvian Song and Dance Festival, which mobilises a very large section of society. Māris, 43, has lived in London since 1997 and sings in a Latvian choir, and he believes the Song Festival helps otherwise passive choir members 'come together':

When the Song Festival is approaching the choir gains new members; many people join up. Now [after the 2013 Song and Dance Festival] the choir is still on the same wave, because not many people have left, and that is lovely. It seemed that a year after the Song Festival, the desire of people to sing would disappear, but that hasn't happened.

Of course, when living outside Latvia such amateur work requires additional effort, but the benefits from such efforts include diasporic solidarity and opportunities for self-realisation. Nonetheless, amateur groups attract only a small segment of Latvian emigrants. Only 1.7% of respondents from the UK said in *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey that they were part of an amateur arts collective, which was far fewer than those taking part in other interest groups (such as sports teams, handi-craft groups and others) or religious organisations, in which respectively 3.7% and 4.1% of respondents were involved. The desire among Latvian emigrants to maintain links to Latvia's cultural milieu is also seen in the comparatively high level of desire to attend Latvian theatrical performances in the UK (42.7%), as well as to see Latvian films (42.5%). The point is that it is much more likely that emigrants who have a strong sense of belonging will want to see Latvian theatrical productions, movies and art exhibitions.

Another practice of long distance belonging is the celebration of Latvian holidays. Summer Solstice on 23 June is a substantial tradition which is widely celebrated in Latvia as well as among Latvian migrants in the UK. This tradition marks Midsummer time by combining ancient folk traditions with contemporary rituals. *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey in 2014 found that during the previous 2 years, the majority of migrants (64.5%) in Great Britain had taken part in Summer Solstice celebrations. This was more common among ethnic Latvians (72.3%) than ethnic Russians (55.5%). Many emigrants do not have the chance to celebrate the holiday because it is often on a weekday, but despite these problems, interviewees spoke of visiting friends or lighting a Summer Solstice campfire. Photographs from respondents' family archives indicate that the Summer Solstice is celebrated with richly-set tables and a merry atmosphere, very much reminiscent of the way the holiday is celebrated in Latvia.

Arnis, a man in his early 50s, in Huntingdon, said:

We celebrate the Solstice here in my garden. We have a flag, and we raise it. Look [pointing to a photograph], here I'm still wearing the Summer Solstice crown. My daughter took

another picture that can be seen on Draugiem.lv.<sup>2</sup> Our neighbour Ramona was here with her family. I have to say that it was rather exotic for her. We put a crown on the head of Haldo [Ramona's son-in-law who is of Portuguese origin].

Anna, 31 and from London, said:

We have a couple of guys called Jānis in our neighbourhood [the Summer Solstice in Latvia is also known as the Festival of Jānis]. One of them lives in Zone 3 or 4 [the areas of the city far from the centre] in London, but he has a fairly large garden, so we had a campfire and a table. All kinds of Latvians whom I did not know and their friends came together. Latvian music was played. It was an event.

Many respondents had heard of the traditional celebrations of the Summer Solstice at the Latvian property *Straumēni*, which is near Leicester and is owned by the *Daugavas Vanagi Foundation*, an NGO of the old Latvian emigrant diaspora who fled as refugees after World War II.<sup>3</sup> In recent years however, the largest event has been organised by the non-profit organization *Bērze Strazdi*, an NGO established by contemporary Latvians migrants living in Corby.<sup>4</sup> Still, most people in Great Britain celebrate the Summer Solstice with friends and family members, and only one-fifth have taken part in public events.

Celebrating the establishment of the Republic of Latvia on November 18, 1918, and other important historical events is also part of the ethno-cultural context of long distance belonging and, occasionally, it interacts with the rules pertaining to political context. In recent years, there have been many public celebrations in the UK marking Latvia's Independence Day on November 18. These have been organised by the Latvian Embassy in the UK and by emigrant communities. Guest artists from Latvia have been invited to take part. Observations in 2014 indicate that November 18 celebrations in a small town consolidate Latvian emigrants to a far greater extent than is the case, for instance, in London, where people know less about one another and are more alienated. In smaller, more compact towns, it is also easier for emigrants to recognise unifying cultural codes and behavioural patterns. Despite public events throughout Great Britain, however, November 18 celebrations mobilise only a small segment of emigrants. *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey reveals that one-quarter of respondents from the UK have celebrated the event in the past 2 years. November 18 is celebrated by 40.4% of Latvians and 3% of Russian-speaking respondents. An identical question in a survey in 2012 in Latvia found that 72% of respondents celebrated November 18 (Kaprāns and Saulītis 2017, p. 50) in the kin state. That points to the potential of Latvian Independence Day as a foundation around which migrants in the UK can consolidate their social networks in the future.

<sup>2</sup>One of the most popular social networking sites in Latvia.

<sup>3</sup>Data from E. Apse-Beriņa (2013, p. 80) show that as many as 9% of surveyed respondents in Great Britain had at one point celebrated the Summer Solstice at *Straumēni*.

<sup>4</sup>The Summer Solstice celebration in 2012 at *Straumēni* was cancelled because of an insufficient response (Delfi 2012). In 2015, a major Summer Solstice celebration was organised in the Great Park of Rockingham Palace, with organisers claiming an attendance of 3782 people (Latviesiem 2015).

New traditions have begun to emerge in recent years, and the Latvian Embassy in Great Britain and representatives of the diaspora have worked together successfully in organising them. On May 3, 2015, for instance, Latvian Culture Days were held for the third time. Many amateur groups performed, and there was a crafts market. The event is organised to celebrate the date when the Supreme Council of Soviet Latvia voted to restore the country's independence on May 4, 1990, and that imbues the tradition with political as well as ethno-cultural importance. These events and others demonstrate the important role played by motivated people with good organisational abilities who want to celebrate significant national moments in places in the UK which are home to larger communities of Latvians.

Attitudes toward the Latvian language also reveal the role of long distance belonging among Latvian migrants, and this often brings together the ethno-cultural and political contexts. *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey of 2014 shows that only one-half of respondents in Great Britain speak Latvian at home. This sheds light on the transnational circumstances under which Latvian emigrants live, and it also points to the fairly high potential for assimilation. The survey, however, does not indicate a strong association between the emigrants' Latvian language skills and the amount of time they have spent in the UK. In general terms the Latvian language is still a powerful link between Latvian migrants and Latvia and its cultural space.<sup>5</sup>

The issue of language skills is rather different when it comes to the children of emigrants. For them assimilation is not merely possible, but almost certain. The survey shows that nearly one-third of respondents do not care whether their children speak Latvian. One finding is that the desire to teach the language to children so that they speak it freely is largely linked to the extent to which the parents have a sense of belonging to Latvia and its residents. There are also ethno-linguistic differences when it comes to this issue. It is far more important to ethnic Latvians to ensure that their children speak Latvian than it is to ethnic Russians from Latvia.

In interviews, Latvian emigrants say that their children adapt to the Anglophone world very quickly and sometimes even speak English in the family context, even if both parents are Latvians and speak Latvian to the children. The Latvian language, however, is of great importance to emigrants, and they are more likely to be critical about voluntary assimilation. At the same time, many parents do not try to force their children to learn Latvian. This is seen more as a symbolic link for this specific generation or as an individual choice, rather than a collective obligation toward the Latvian nation. It may also be that many Latvian emigrants who live in small towns and meet regularly with other Latvians in the UK are less worried about the language skills of their children, because they see no threat in this regard. *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey of 2014 reveals that those Latvian migrants indicating little concern over whether their children will be able to speak the language are

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<sup>5</sup> Only 6.8% of Latvian parents surveyed sent their children to Latvian Saturday or Sunday schools where classes were taught in Latvian. Far more often, as far as parents are concerned, the language is taught through audio-visual materials (66.3%), teaching at home (40.5%) and reading books (56.6%).

also likely to have at least three close friends from Latvia living in the UK. Inta, who is 45, from Huntingdon, said:

I had a Latvian friend from Boston who, for some reason or other, just detested Latvia. Everything for her was in English; she spoke to her son in English. I said to her: 'Sintija, why don't you speak Latvian to your son. You can teach the language to your child for free.' She replied: 'No, what has Latvia given to me?' [...] When she meets me, she mixes up Latvian and English words.

Arnīs, in his late 20s and from London, said:

I want to hear the Latvian language. Whenever I'm in Latvia, in Rīga, I hear the Latvian language, and that makes me happy. Perhaps I don't hear Latvian all the time, but when I do, it makes me happy, because that is a sense of home. That is my home, even though I am here.

Emigrants see Latvian culture not just as an important pillar for national identity or a link to Latvia, but also as a source of self-confidence and a positive identity that is occasionally involved in symbolic boundary-making. Māris, 43, who lives in London, says that this positive identity is manifested as respect *'toward those people whom I know in Latvia, whether they be artists, politicians or writers. [At such moments] I am proud to be a Latvian.'* At the same time, it is not just traditional or elite culture that inspires people. The same is true of ideas about the typical behaviour and work morality of Latvians, which emigrants mention as another positive element of Latvian identity and contrast themselves with British people in their vicinity, whom they critique on these grounds.

Pēteris, a 32 year old living in London, emphasises the professional characteristics of Latvians:

In truth, Latvians are very hard-working and capable, because they have language skills. [...] I have only encountered positive people who say to me: 'You're from Latvia. Great! I want you to work for my team, because I know that you people do a lot of work'.

Traditions, recognisable behavioural patterns and the Latvian language are the 'anchors' that ensure that Latvian migrants see Latvia as their home. A substantial proportion of respondents in the UK (44.6%) say that a retained understanding of the Latvian language is of importance in terms of encouraging people to return to Latvia. Yet there are significant differences ( $p < .001$ ) from the ethno-linguistic perspective. This is a very important or fairly important factor for 50.7% of Latvian respondents, but only 33.6% of Russian respondents. 'Home' also refers to an area that is filled with nostalgic memories and the desire to maintain clear and specific links with Latvia. This sentimental mood often appears in interviews, reminding us of the nation as a magnified version of the family. Simultaneously, this mood usually does not conflict with a sense of belonging to the UK.

Jana, 26 and living in London said:

When I am here [in Latvia], I feel that I have come home. The truth is that before flights to other countries I do not feel very excited, but when I am travelling to Latvia, I am so excited that I can't even sleep. I don't know why. Perhaps it's because I know who is waiting for me. I always want to go to Latvia very, very much. When you go home for a two week holiday, the two weeks are super. It's a holiday: you simply know the country, and you have friends of some kind or other. It's great.



Māra, 60, in Peterborough:

Only here did I come to understand that I love Latvia. Oh, yes! I live in Latvia, I am a Latvian, I have the sea, the forest, mushrooms and berries, and here I knew that it is my motherland, and the motherland is not to blame for what is happening there, because my motherland will always be my motherland. I can live anywhere.

Overall, this analysis suggests that the ethno-cultural context of long distance belonging emanates from the will of a specific group of Latvian migrants to preserve the relevant markers of their national identity while not closing themselves off to the social arena and values of their country of residence. Migrants in the UK often frame the strengthening of links with Latvian culture as an individual strategy, which may reduce the motivation to become involved in more organised and shared forms of ethno-cultural belonging. This individualised approach to Latvian culture enables a flexible balance between the solidarities of the UK and the national identity templates and affectivities inherited from Latvia. Moreover, a close and ever clearer link to the Latvian cultural space does not indicate that emigrants are eager to return to Latvia or protect their cultural heritage. Instead, it indicates the desire to strengthen their diasporic identity after they have decided to stay abroad for a longer period of time. Arguably, diverse participation in ethno-cultural practices allows a noticeable part of the Latvian migrants to adapt more easily to life in the UK, and simultaneously it is also an indicator of successful adaptation.

## 6.5 The Political Context

Practices related to the ideological convictions and political participation of Latvian migrants establish a foundation for the political context of long distance belonging, which helps form the political identity of migrants as well as their ideas about the kin state as a political entity. The political context is often embedded in the ethno-cultural context of long distance belonging yet analytically it is important to delineate this field, as it accumulates the migrants' intentions towards power relations and political hierarchies in the kin state.

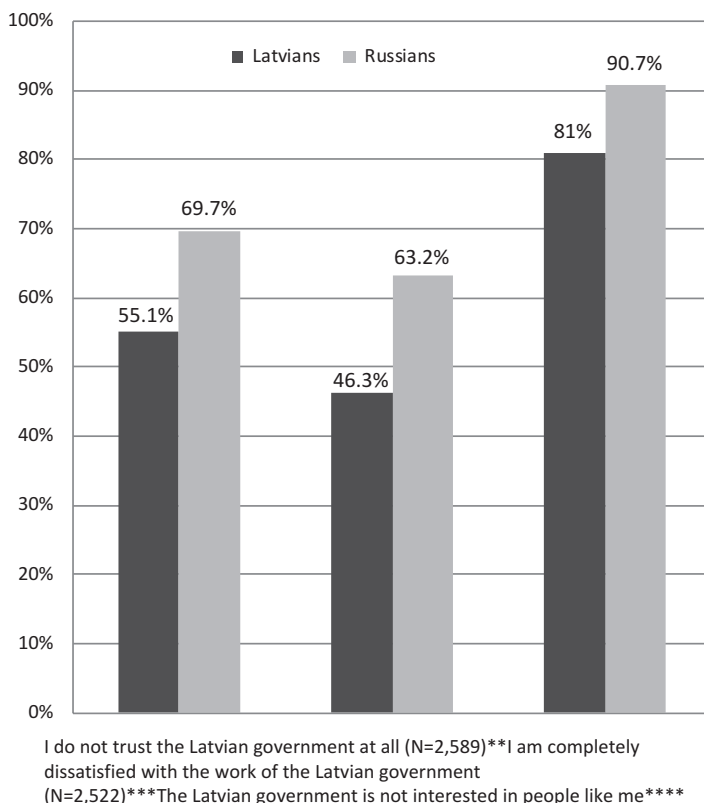
Ķešāne (2011, p. 71) has argued that stories told by Latvian migrants 'include an explicit discourse of distrust. This is seen in contacts with fellow residents and civil servants in Latvia, as well as in terms of attitudes toward Latvia as such'.

Emigrants in the UK are indeed very critical of Latvia's government. In *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey more than half the respondents (61%) said they did not trust the government at all, rating it at the level of zero on a 10-point scale. The overwhelming majority of the UK respondents (84.5%) believe that Latvia's government is not interested in people like them, i.e., those who have migrated to Great Britain. Only 9.2% said they felt that politicians in Latvia are truly concerned about the situation of Latvians who live abroad. It is important to note that this critical attitude remains, irrespective of how long the respondent has lived in the UK, and that is an indication of the profound and fundamental nature of



the dissatisfaction. It must also be noted, however, that people who actually live in Latvia are also very critical of the government; as shown by an opinion survey in February 2016, where 75% were totally or mostly dissatisfied with the government's work (DNB Latvian Barometer 2016, p. 7).

From an ethno-linguistic perspective, negative attitudes toward the Latvian government vary significantly. Russian-speaking emigrants are much more critical than Latvian ones (Fig. 6.1). It must also be emphasised that a stronger sense of belonging among emigrants can be associated with lower levels of trust in the government: both those who feel a close link to Latvia and those who do not feel that link rate their trust in the government at zero (64.2% and 57% respectively). While acknowledging this common critical mood, it is nevertheless important to emphasise that attitudes toward the country as such – not just as a political but also an ethno-cultural and social entity – are far more positive among those respondents who feel closer links to Latvia and a stronger sense of belonging to the people of Latvia. Notably, according to *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey, 66% of

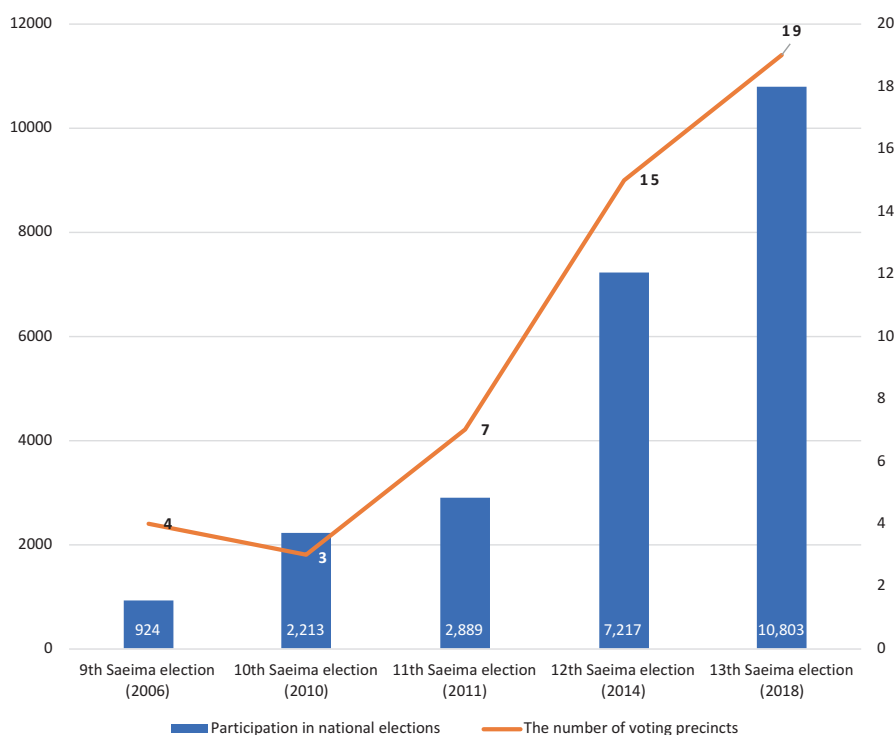


**Fig. 6.1** Attitude towards the Latvian government. (Source: The author, based on *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey. Note: In all graphs the answers 'fully agree' and 'mostly agree' are merged together)

Latvian and 42% of Russian-speaking migrants in UK feel closely attached to Latvia. This alludes to significant differences on a generic level of long distance belonging between migrants from the two ethno-linguistic groups.

At the discourse level distrust of Latvian politics in general and in the government in particular makes emigrants who live in the UK similar to the majority of the kin state society. Many emigrants explain their negative attitude by making statements that are reflected in the Latvian media and in public opinion criticizing Latvian politicians.

According to the Central Elections Commission (CEC) of the Republic of Latvia, political participation among emigrants in Great Britain has increased over the past 10 years when it comes to parliamentary (Saeima) elections, reaching the highest level in the 2018 election (Fig. 6.2). Unfortunately, a difference between the number of registered and actual voters limits the possibility of calculating the level of political participation in the UK precisely. Data from *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey show that 22.5% (n = 2237) of respondents voted in the 2011 parliamentary election. Other evidence and methods of evaluation indicate that these



**Fig. 6.2** The activity of voters in parliamentary elections registered in Great Britain and the number of voting precincts (Source: The author, based on the information provided by the Central Election Commission of Latvia 2018)

results might be a fairly accurate reflection of participation rates of Latvian migrants in parliamentary elections to date (see Lulle et al. 2015a, b, pp. 80–86).

Respondents who feel a greater sense of belonging to Latvia and its residents were more active in voting in parliamentary elections. Latvian and Russian respondents voted at more or less equal levels: 23.2% and 19.9% respectively. Although emigrants who were not satisfied with life in the UK were more active in voting in Latvian parliamentary elections, this factor was unlikely to prompt higher electoral activity. This is because, on average, there is a good level of satisfaction among emigrants with their living conditions in the UK.

Political apathy was among the reasons given when respondents reflected as to why they felt no motivation to vote in elections. Underlying factors explaining the political behaviour of the emigrants could be an objective or conscious distancing from events in Latvia, possibly affected by the distrust and critical attitudes mentioned earlier.

Eight new voting precincts for the 2014 parliament election increased voter participation in Great Britain by 37% (Fig. 6.2). It must be noted that voter activity also increased in previously established precincts (London, Bradford, *Straumēni*), which indicates not just a structural effect (more election precincts), but also increased political participation among Latvian migrants. In advance of parliamentary elections, there are often complaints that Latvian politicians do not do enough to mobilise voters who live abroad, and that is why turnout is so low. *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey found that only 9.2% of respondents in the UK thought that politicians in Latvia really cared about the situation of Latvia's citizens living abroad. Similar thoughts were expressed in several interviews in which emigrants also said they felt political parties showed very low levels of interest in them. At the same time, only 21.7% of respondents said they wanted to meet with Latvian politicians in the UK. Notably, those who wanted more political communication were twice as active in the 2014 election to the Saeima (the national parliament of Latvia) as those who did not. Hence one may argue that even if Latvian party campaigns were more focused on emigrants, the highest participation would still be observed among the most politically active emigrants.

If we analyse the choices of voters in Great Britain (Table 6.1), then we see that the most support during the last five Saeima elections was received by new parties or opposition parties. This shows that emigrants in the UK transform their criticisms of Latvia's government into real political activities, supporting parties for which the *modus operandi* is to criticise the governing parties for mistakes, including the mass emigration of Latvia's residents. The results of these political choices can be interpreted in terms of a certain segment of migrants as a vicious cycle of hopes and disappointments which, in the long term, have established frustration as the foundation of their thoughts and attitudes. The logic of disappointment and hope can be seen very well in terms of the political party *KPV LV*, which received the most votes in Great Britain during the Saeima election in 2018. The party's most vivid representative was the actor Artuss Kaimiņš, who for a long time has actively and purposefully worked with Latvian migrants, particularly in Great Britain. His political image was original and his campaign message constantly critical of the governing

**Table 6.1** Political choices among voters in Great Britain

	9th Saeima election (2006)	10th Saeima election (2010)	11th Saeima election (2011)	12th Saeima election (2014)	13th Saeima election (2018)	Status before election
New Era	<b>186</b>					Opposition party
For the Fatherland and Freedom/ LNNK	132	268				Coalition party
People's Party	116					Coalition party
Green/Farmer Alliance	90	212	155	787	244	Coalition party
For Human Rights in a United Latvia	86					Opposition party
Harmony Centre/ Harmony	71	441	564	825	612	New party/ opposition party
First Party of Latvia/Latvia's Way	70					New party
For a Good Latvia		127				New party
Unity		<b>1047</b>	615	1916		New party/ coalition party
Zatlers Reform Party			<b>846</b>			New party
Everything for Latvia/For Fatherland & Freedom/LNNK			533	1253	517	New party/ coalition party
From the Heart for Latvia				289		New party
Latvian Alliance of Regions				<b>1990</b>		New party
KPV LV					<b>5681</b>	New party
For the Development					1112	New party
New Conservative Party					1005	New party
New Unity					415	Coalition party

Source: The author, based on the information provided by the Central Election Commission of Latvia (2018)

Note: This table shows the results of those parties that actually won seats in the Saeima

parties, perhaps chiming with the dominant mood among migrant voters and encouraging those who had not been politically active before to vote. Voters in the UK see Kaimiņš as a channel for their dissatisfaction with the political elite and their pessimism about Latvia's future. He was also seen as an opportunity to mock the political elite, as when emigrants admitted in interviews that they had voted for Kaimiņš, they often laughed. Yet, in the election, among all politicians Kaimiņš received the highest support from migrant voters.

Māra, 60, living in Peterborough:

Guess who I voted for? Artuss! (laughs) [...] I simply don't understand why such people still work there [the Saeima]. Why are they there? I don't know. [...] But Artuss is like a thorn in the side of those people, I believe.

Among the UK respondents who feel close links to Latvia, one most often encounters migrants who left the country to improve their standard of living (50.6%), deal with financial difficulties (48.2%) or earn much more money (43.2%). Respondents who were encouraged to leave by social pessimism or uncertainty about Latvia's future (e.g. 'I see no future for myself and my children', or 'I don't like the processes and the political environment in Latvia' or 'I want to live in a stable and orderly country') were much less likely to demonstrate a sense of belonging to Latvia or its residents. Although both groups of respondents present the quintessence of 'push' factors for crisis migrants who left Latvia during the economic recession (McCollum et al. 2017), the survey data do suggest that closer links to Latvia are more often found among profoundly economic migrants, but less often among those who are inclined to see Latvia as a socially insecure and unpredictable country. This also indicates implicit dividing lines between moderate scepticism and fundamental pessimism with respect to the kin state, which helps better describe the contrasting electoral behaviour among Latvian migrants in the UK.

It is also important to take ethno-linguistic factors into account in voter choices. Latvians and Russian-speakers in the UK, as in Latvia, are likely to vote for different parties.

Overall, there are two competing strategies of long distance belonging when it comes to voters in Great Britain: one is revolutionary, the other is evolutionary. The former group wants cardinal changes to the political *status quo*, while the latter supports the existing political order even if critical of the governing political elite. There is a possible parallel to the types of political attitudes in relation to long distance nationalism defined by Glick-Schiller (2005, pp. 574–576), that the discourse of revolutionary migrants leans towards the idea of changing the political order, while evolutionary ones are more open to a discourse of participation. The revolutionaries see the existing political order as kleptocracy and a rule of injustice that is detrimental to Latvia. However, supporters of the revolutionary strategy are split on the ethno-linguistic basis. That is, dissatisfied ethnic Latvian migrants are more likely to identify with revolutionaries who represent the Latvian cultural space, while Russian speakers prefer those who identify themselves with Latvia's Russian-speaking community. This conclusion is in line with previous research that has ana-

lysed political splits among immigrants and the relevant and different manifestations of long distance nationalism (e.g., Jones 2014; Senay 2013).

Because of the low turnout of voters abroad, this chapter does not focus on the local government and European Parliament elections as manifestations of the political context of long distance belonging (Lulle et al. 2015a, b). It is important, however, to focus on referenda as an area of political activity. Emigrants from Latvia demonstrated unprecedented participation in the so-called 'language referendum' of February 18, 2012, with involvement equally high among Latvian and Russian-speaking voters.<sup>6</sup> From those who participated in this referendum, 12,020 voters in the UK voted against a proposal to make Russian a second official language in Latvia while 3972 voted in favour. The vote in Britain was at almost exactly the same proportions as in Latvia itself. The highest support for the proposal in terms of total votes in each precinct was registered in London (44.5%) and Bradford (41.8%) (Central Elections Commission 2018). The language referendum and its results in Great Britain clearly showed the powerful mobilising potential of Latvian ethno-cultural nationalism. Many emigrants vividly remember the referendum, talking about long queues and a particularly electrified atmosphere. Years after the referendum, many still speak with great emotion about this experience, like 32 year old Kristiāna, living in London:

The queue at the precinct in London really was very, very long, and Dainis [the respondent's husband] and I thought about leaving it. Then we heard a few Russian-speaking citizens from Latvia yelling 'Down with the language of dogs, down with the language of dogs!' We were in that queue, and I said to Dainis: 'You know, no matter how cold it is and how long the queue is, I'm not going anywhere. I'm going to stand in the queue, and I'm going to cast my vote. [...] If that guy hadn't said what he said... well, something clicked in me to say 'No' to what he was saying.

Another emigrant in London was 42 year-old Māris:

Something had to be done. It would have been impermissible for us not to participate, allowing someone else to make the decision in our place. In London, we had to stand in a very long queue for several hours, and it was very cold. [...] In a certain sense it was very moving though, in terms of such a large crowd of Latvians and Russians. There were emotions there, but for the most part people were very cosy, friendly and talkative.

Another aspect of the political context of long distance belonging is the desire to maintain citizenship in the country of origin which has become a pivotal issue for many Latvian migrants after the Brexit vote. Especially, as Lulle et al. (2017, p. 8) argue, this issue is relevant 'for those in stable jobs and/or relationships'. Amendments to Latvian citizenship law adopted in 2013 allowed dual citizenship for exiles forced to leave Latvia between June 17, 1940 and May 4, 1990 due to foreign occupation, and descendants born prior to October 1, 2014; ethnic Latvians or Līvi, or emigrants living in Australia, Brazil, New Zealand, NATO, European Free Trade Association or European Union countries (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2017). These citizenship amendments reflect the flight of Latvians to 'the West' at

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<sup>6</sup>For the political implications of the language referendum see Ijabs (2016).

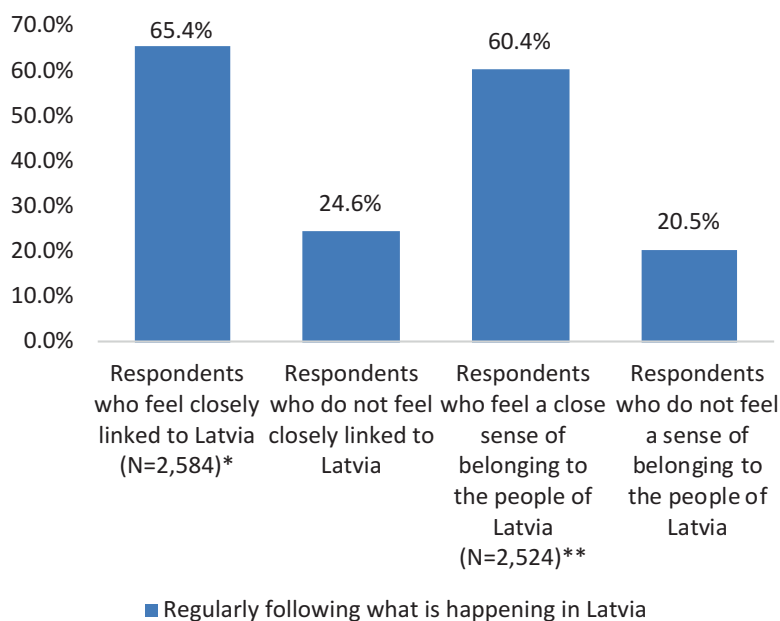
the end of World War II as well as to recognize the reality of contemporary Latvian migration.

In interviews, Latvian emigrants said that the possibility of dual citizenship is another factor motivating them to apply for British citizenship after 5 years in Great Britain. It is not possible to determine the true proportion of dual citizens and trends in this area, because Latvian and British government institutions do not collect such data. Those in favour of dual citizenship mention factors such as social benefits in the country of residence, ease of travel, etc. Respondents also said that British citizenship would give them a greater sense of security when abroad. The introduction of dual citizenship has largely reduced the psychological tensions that existed when emigrants from Latvia had to choose between the instrumental and emotional forms of belonging (see Ķešāne 2011, p. 68). Some interviewees discussed obstacles that reduce their desire to apply for dual citizenship such as the relatively high cost and their insufficient English language skills. Yet, it is expected that as the proportion of people from Latvia who have lived in Great Britain for more than 5 years increases in the near future, there will also be greater interest in dual citizenship. This suggests that in the foreseeable future, a definite transnational identity will emerge among Latvian migrants based on dual citizenship, which is particularly strong among the Latvian diaspora in the UK. Moreover, a favourable socio-economic situation and personal achievements in the host country strengthen the transnational identity, i.e. satisfaction with living conditions is strongly associated with the sense of belonging not just to Latvia, but also the UK. Yet, according to *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey, the proportion of transnational migrants is comparatively small, with 24% of respondents feeling close links both to Latvia and Great Britain, and 21% feeling close links to the residents of both countries. Many respondents have apparently not yet developed sufficiently strong ties to their new country of residence and its society. Interview data collected in 2014 also show that Latvians still feel like immigrants even after many years in the UK and notice the growing negative mood about immigrants in the British political and media discourse partly triggered by the then-upcoming Brexit vote.

## 6.6 The Social Context

Alongside the ethno-cultural and political contexts that establish or strengthen links between Latvian migrants in Great Britain and their kin state, there are also practices that make sense from a mere social perspective in the context of long distance belonging. These are practices and discourses that assign social importance to the country of origin, as opposed to ethno-cultural or political significance.

An everyday practice in the social context is the desire of emigrants to be informed about events in Latvia, to maintain involvement in Latvia's information space and to use Latvian media outlets. An interest in what is happening in Latvia first and foremost confirms that emigrants do not want to break their social links to their country of origin and its residents. These links are equally strong among



**Fig. 6.3** Sense of belonging to Latvia among those who follow events in Latvia regularly (Source: The author, based on *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey)

Latvian and Russian-speaking migrants who regularly monitor what is happening back home (63.7% and 65.6% respectively). Remarkably, the amount of time spent in the UK does not generate significant differences in their willingness to follow events in Latvia. But data from *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey show that respondents who feel closely linked to Latvia and its residents are more likely ( $p < .001$ ) to be regularly interested in what is happening in Latvia (Fig. 6.3). In terms of specific events, 23.5% of respondents regularly monitor cultural events in Latvia, though these are more likely to be Latvians (31.6%) and not Russian-speakers (12.7%). When it comes to sport, 79.8% of Latvians and 58.3% of Russophones are proud of their kin state if a Latvian athlete does well at international level. This suggests that the less *ethnicised* segments of Latvia's information space – sport and popular culture – appeal to both ethno-linguistic groups.

The availability of information is pivotal when it comes to Internet sites and other media that are the main source of information for Latvian migrants in Great Britain. Migrants who are regularly interested in things that are happening in Latvia most often use the largest Latvian Internet portals (Delfi, Tvnet) and social networking sites (Facebook, Draugiem.lv). The traditional and specialised media are thus more like peripheral sources of information, which is important in the context of regional identities or lifestyles. That by no means suggests, however, that emigrants do not use the content of the traditional media, as presented on the Internet. Interviews with emigrants show that media usage habits are based on the desire to maintain links with the country of origin, as well as on ideological beliefs.



Respondents in the UK do not express high levels of support for the idea of establishing a television channel addressed specifically to the diaspora. According to *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey, 39.3% would like to see a channel like this, while 32.7% feel that it is not necessary. The Latvian diaspora media which creates content for a dispersed emigrant segment in Great Britain also intends to increase availability, as it is a prerequisite for the sustainability of these media. For example, *Anglo-Baltic News*, one of the most visible Latvian press outlets published and distributed in the UK, admits that lack of proper IT solutions hamper its ambitions to be the largest and most prominent Latvian diaspora medium in Great Britain (Lulle et al. 2015a, b, p. 18).

Notably, regular mediated or direct interactions with a kin state in a broader perspective might strengthen the awareness of transnational identity. The 2014 survey data showed that 30% of the UK respondents had visited Latvia every half a year, but 50% did it more frequently. Regardless of the regularity with which one travels to the kin state, the emigrants keep in close contact with family or friends in Latvia: 72.6% call relatives or friends almost every day or at least once per week. In addition, 36.4% of respondents answered that they regularly – at least four times a year – provide financial support (remittances) to their relatives or friends in Latvia. This suggests that the transnational identity formation of Latvian emigrants oscillates between two ideal types, as proposed by Dahinden (2010): localised diasporic transnationals and localised mobile transnationals. While the former type is characterised by rather low physical mobility to Latvia but high anchorage in British everyday life, then the latter is based on high mobility but also high anchorage – both in the country of residence as well as in the country of origin. In line with these data though, the localised mobile transnational type remains more prominent among Latvian migrants.

A less common manifestation of the social context relates to charitable projects which Latvian emigrants in Great Britain have been using most actively in recent years. Kings and Lulle (Kings et al. 2014, pp. 27–29) have pointed to this in the past when studying young, highly qualified Latvian emigrants living in London. Philanthropic initiatives, however, are also seen in other socio-demographic groups, thus becoming a new social fact that describes Latvian migrants as a community. *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey data show that charitable ideas gain much engagement among migrants in the UK: 45.4% of respondents in 2014 said that during the previous 12 months they had donated money in Latvia or in their country of residence to support an organisation or a specific goal. The data do not directly show the proportion of respondents who donated money specifically in Latvia, but they do show that the most active donors are those respondents who feel closely linked to Latvia and its residents. Those more likely to donate money are emigrants who have settled in Great Britain and lived there for many years.

Latvian migrants in Great Britain are involved in long-lasting and one-off charitable events. More durable projects include the ‘Giving for Latvia’ organization, which was established in 2009 by young Latvian professionals who were working in London. The aim of the project was to support children and adults in Latvia who had suffered emotional and physical violence, as well as those with problems of

age, disability or financial status.<sup>7</sup> The organisation's fundraising is based mostly on charitable parties and auctions. The 'Assistance Bank' that was established in 2014 in the UK is aimed at supporting residents of Latvia both in Latvia and in Great Britain with food, clothing, household items and furniture, as well as advice and consultations on handling documents.<sup>8</sup> The experience of *Ziedot.lv*, the largest charity organisation in Latvia, also shows that residents of Latvia who live in the United Kingdom are active donors, particularly when it comes to major charitable projects such as *Angels over Latvia*, *Charity Day* and *Schoolbag*. Donors from the UK and Ireland were also particularly responsive when funds were being collected to help the victims of the collapse of a supermarket in the Riga neighbourhood of Zolitūde in 2013.<sup>9</sup>

Apart from these co-ordinated initiatives, emigrants also donate money to specific people or locations in Latvia. In 2015, for instance, *Blackbirds of Bērze* organised a Summer Solstice party at Rockingham Castle to collect donations for Mareks Odumiņš (LA 2015), a disabled man living Latvia. Emigrants have also been increasingly involved in the internationally recognized *Shoebox* initiative each November when thousands of churches, groups and individual donors prepare and collect shoeboxes filled with toys, school supplies, personal items and other small gifts and send them to children. Inta and Māra from Peterborough, for instance, have been preparing Christmas gifts for poor families in the Ķekava Administrative District in Latvia for several years. Māra, who is 60 and lives in Peterborough, says:

We do these charitable things, and we send gifts in shoeboxes. I have a box from Spain that I can't even lift. It's still at home. I know of a family with seven children – one a year old, one who is four, one five, 12, 15, 17. You take the gifts to Latvia and then at the Ķekava City Council [...] you look at what you can buy for a one year-old girl or a 12 year-old boy. If you can't think of anything, then you buy candy. Everyone eats candy, and the children will be happy. If they have nothing, then I think that they will be happy with anything. Last year we had 70 families. I offered everyone at work a chance to donate. The year before last there was great support.

The survey shows that both Latvians (45.3%) and Russian-speakers (45.5%) have been equally involved in donations, which shows that in the social context, the motivations of the two ethno-linguistic groups are similar; that is, helping people in Latvia. Respondents who have donated money have significant differences ( $p < .001$ ) when it comes to other contexts of long distance belonging. For instance, donors are more likely to have voted in Saeima elections and taken part in November 18 celebrations. Arguably, the social context of long distance belonging among Latvian emigrants in Great Britain has closer interaction with a political context than with an ethno-cultural one.

While philanthropic initiatives involve various groups of Latvian migrants, highly qualified Latvians in the UK also seek more specific civic forms of supporting the development of Latvia. In particular, this applies to non-governmental

<sup>7</sup> See [www.givingforlatvia.com](http://www.givingforlatvia.com)

<sup>8</sup> See 'Palīdzības banka' (n.d.) at [www.draugiem.lv](http://www.draugiem.lv)

<sup>9</sup> A telephone interview with Ziedot.lv communications director Ilze Ošāne, 23 July 2015.

efforts to advance Latvian investment projects and share professional experience with those who represent the Latvian business environment. The UK's Latvian Business Network is one example of socially motivated rather than politically or ethno-culturally motivated practices of long distance belonging. The network was formalised in 2015, and its goal, among others, is to help Latvian enterprises entering the UK market.<sup>10</sup> Yet another example of similar activity is the Latvian-British Chamber of Commerce. The chamber takes a more institutionalised approach to accomplish its mission to “encourage, promote and foster business interests and commercial relations between Latvia and the UK within the core fields of technology, innovation and SMEs” (Latvian-British Chamber of Commerce 2018).

## 6.7 Conclusions

In studying Pakistani communities in northern England, social anthropologist Pnina Werbner (2002) has argued that when it comes to the diaspora, there should be a conceptual split between an ‘aesthetic community’ and a ‘moral community.’ In an aesthetic community, the diasporic imagination is focused on popular culture and nostalgic rituals and ceremonies that relate to the country of origin. A de-politicised transnational diaspora embodies these in performative terms, demanding only that its members experience nothing but enjoyment and consumption of the flow of popular culture. In this identity project, as Werbner (2002, p. 12) notes, ‘there is no sense [...] of a moral or politically grounded transnational subjectivity, of responsibility for another’.

As a moral community, in contrast, a diaspora accents co-responsibility and political attitudes toward events in the country of origin. Werbner’s perspective can also be applied to Latvian emigrants in the UK, particularly focusing on the way in which emigrants express long distance belonging in the ethno-cultural, political and social contexts. Some diasporic practices are likely to be more prone to intertwine different contexts. For example, maintaining the symbolic value of the Latvian language or marking historical dates might be relevant both in terms of ethno-cultural and political relations. However, data analysed in this chapter indicate that it is important to keep these contexts apart, because they include different and often mutually exclusive motives of long distance belonging.

In the ethno-cultural context, ethnic Latvian migrants rediscover and strengthen links to the Latvian cultural space, its traditions and its collective schemes of self-understanding. Interaction with the Latvian cultural milieu in a direct or indirect way helps to maintain ideas about one’s belonging to a broader and precisely limited collectivity. Explicit belonging to Latvian culture allows emigrants to emphasise the specificity and uniqueness of their identity, as opposed to the cosmopolitan and hybrid British cultural space. Participation in the practices of the Latvian cultural space such as teaching the Latvian language to children and upholding tradi-

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<sup>10</sup> See the network’s Facebook page [https://www.facebook.com/UKLBusiness/?ref=br\\_rs](https://www.facebook.com/UKLBusiness/?ref=br_rs)

tions is mostly seen as another way to present oneself in everyday life in Great Britain, but not as a moral duty. For that reason, when it comes to the ethno-cultural context, Latvian emigrants see the diaspora first as an 'aesthetic community' that is brought together by individual and idiosyncratic choices to remain part of the Latvian cultural space while at the same time maintaining openness to transnational relationships and influences. Perhaps this also means that Latvian migrants want to distance themselves from the ethno-cultural nationalism that dominates in Latvia – nationalism that emphasises a collective duty toward culture, thus placing individual activities in a stricter normative framework. Simultaneously, however, the idea of belonging to a unique cultural world also represents symbolic capital (e.g. traditions, behavioural patterns) that allows Latvian emigrants to overcome the ontological insecurity that emerges when people spend a longer period of time and become embedded in British multi-culturalism. Among Russian-speaking emigrants, links to the Latvian cultural world are much weaker even though their sense of belonging to Latvia is still at a sufficiently high level. The absence of this symbolic capital and a naturally existing hybrid identity reduces barriers much more easily among Russian-speaking emigrants when it comes to becoming assimilated into British society.

The political context of long distance belonging reveals simmering distrust of the work of Latvia's government and overall disappointment among emigrants with Latvia's political elite, as well as political apathy. In a certain group of emigrants, this disappointment is so dramatic and durable that it facilitates an ongoing desire for revolutionary changes in Latvia's political system. Still, the critical attitude held by emigrants in the UK toward the kin state is a complex phenomenon that makes possible fairly diverse political manifestations of long distance nationalism. This is based both on different socio-economic experiences in the past, on differing understandings about the most appropriate political strategy to deal with problems in Latvia and differing relationships with the Latvian cultural space. It is also true that in terms of the political context, emigrants who live in the United Kingdom have new opportunities to influence the political reality in Latvia, as has been seen in the language referendum and in the regular successes of parties that are not part of the governing elite in parliamentary elections.

Finally, the social context of long distance belonging facilitates the emergence of new forms of allegiance towards Latvia. These are manifested in philanthropic initiatives, in participation in various interest groups and in regular interest about what is happening in Latvia. It is precisely the social context and, in part, the political context that are most open to Russian-speaking emigrants from Latvia who are otherwise isolated from the practices of the Latvian migrants. In recent years, Latvian migrants in the UK who have taken deeper root in that country have used the social context specifically to find new motivation to preserve and strengthen their links to their kin state. This form of belonging and interaction does not put the activities of emigrants into ethno-cultural or political frameworks but it does encourage moral responsibility toward the people of Latvia.

Belonging to various cultural milieus and political realities is becoming inevitable for migrants if they decide to stay in Great Britain for a longer period of time and

if they want to be satisfied with their quality of life, social relationships and self-realisation in their country of residence. Because the community of Latvian emigrants in the UK is still in formation, a transnational identity cannot yet be seen as the most common form of belonging, but this paper has emphasised evidence that speaks in favour of the increasing openness of emigrants toward transnational relationships, as opposed to conscious self-isolation.

This means that in future – perhaps over the next 10 years – the transnational identity of Latvian migrants will become a far more important factor, and that will re-define the contexts of long distance belonging analysed in this paper, instead creating new discourses and practices of belonging. To be sure, the political and social consequences of the Brexit vote will contribute to these transformative processes. Yet this turning point increases rather than decreases uncertainty as to which direction these changes will take in the particular context of long distance belonging.

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# Chapter 7

## Growing Up to Belong Transnationally: Parent Perceptions on Identity Formation Among Latvian Emigrant Children in England



**Daiga Kamerāde and Ieva Skubiņa**

### 7.1 Introduction

Family emigration patterns from Latvia have changed over time. In the early 2000s it was common for parents in Latvia to emigrate to Western European countries but to leave their children, at least temporarily, to be brought up by grandparents and other relatives while they searched for a job and to establish themselves in the new home country (Broka 2009; Trapenciere 2012). Since 2008 an increasing number of parents who have now settled in their new home country have decided to bring up their children themselves. Others now emigrate together with their children (Kamerāde 2017). These children (the so-called ‘1.5 generation’ child migrants) are thus the children born in their country of origin but being brought up in emigration (Rumbaut 1976; Rumbaut and Ima 1988).

The aim of this paper is to examine the perspective of parents on the formation of national and transnational identity among the 1.5 generation migrant children – children born in Latvia but growing up in England – and to factors affecting this. In particular, we focus on language that is central to the formation of children’s national identity, and especially the retention of the mother tongue and the learning of the language of the host country.

The focus in this paper is on emigrants from Latvia living in England, which is the main destination country for the majority of migrants from Latvia (OECD 2014). As Rumbaut and Ima (1988) have emphasised, the 1.5 generation migrants are different in terms of their national identity from their parents. The identity of their parents – the first-generation migrants – was formed in their country of origin

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and they themselves decided to migrate. The 1.5 generation migrants who have directly experienced life in both countries are also different from the second-generation migrants born in the new host country who have received information about their 'homeland' primarily from their parents' stories and memories.

Because of the wide availability of social media, cheap flights and free movement within the EU, it has become much easier to maintain links with the country of origin than it was even a generation ago. Therefore, the formation of transnational identity among children of recent migrants might be significantly different from the experiences of children of previous generations. However, the current understanding of the development of transnational identity is based mostly on research involving the previous generations of migrants and might not fit the experiences of the more recent migrant children. Studies focusing on migrants from Latvia are not an exception to this pattern.

This article enriches the information provided by other scholars who have analysed Latvian migrant national identity formation within the framework of transnationalism in both groups – among adults (Ķešāne 2011; Lulle 2011; Šūpule 2012) and children (Lulle and Klave 2015). Of particular relevance is an article by Cara (2015) on a study of Latvian diaspora children in English schools. The author used quantitative research methods to explain an alarming fact regarding children with English as a second language (Strand et al. 2015). Those children who used Latvian as a first language at home got lower grades in secondary school exams compared to other non-British children and those with English as their first language.

This article first reviews the literature on the 1.5 generation migrants and their specific characteristics, and analyses the main factors that help this group form a sense of belonging and transnational identity. Secondly, using semi-structured in-depth interviews with the parents of 1.5 generation Latvian children currently living in England, their perceptions of the formation of transnational ties in those children are examined. This paper concludes with the implications of those findings for theory and policy making.

## **7.2 Formation of Identity Among 1.5 Generation Migrants and Factors Affecting It**

Identity as a complex and constantly changing phenomenon (Burke 2006) refers to the way in which individuals perceive and define relationships with the world and how these relationships are developed (Norton 1997, 2000, 2013). Identity is a process, which is why it is perhaps more appropriate to talk about identification (Jenkins 2014). Individual identity is constructed during, and through, interaction with others (Jenkins 2014).

There is increasing agreement in the literature that national and ethnic identity is not monolithic and exclusive any more. It is possible that when living in a multi-national and multi-cultural environment or in a new country, the national identity of

the country of origin is supplemented with a new and additional national identity (Parpola 2004). Identity can also be constructed as a set of identities, each multi-faceted, changing and developing in response to changing practices and experiences. Scholars argue that traditional, popular, high and post-modern cultures interact over the boundaries of time and space (Westin 2010). In this context, migration expands the field of identity. The period of nation-states has been replaced by a period of multi-culturalism where boundaries are easy to cross (Urry 2000). Therefore it is important to be aware that identities can reach far beyond the territory (Bauman and May 2001).

Transnational identity is one of the fundamental characteristics of international migration. It occurs in situations when migrants concurrently maintain relationships of high intensity and regularity with their country of origin and country of settlement (Vertovec 2009, 2010), and describes activities which involve regular, intensive and continuous social cross-border contacts. Portes et al. (1999) emphasise the significance of continuity and intensity of contacts.

Transnationalism is also characterised by an imagined integrality with others in a similar situation; subjective feelings of belonging both 'here and there'; culture reproduction that involves combining different cultures and creating new hybrid cultures and political participation across the borders, e.g. expressing an opinion, lobbying or participating in non-governmental organisations (Vertovec 2010).

According to scholars of transnationalism, if migrants gradually reduce their contacts with, and activities related to, their country of origin, they could not be perceived as experiencing transnationalism. Transnationalism differentiates the recent generation of migrants from previous generations. Their social networks and their economic, political and cultural activities, as well as their lifestyle models, often include both countries (Kivisto 2001).

Many studies have focused on the formation of identity, including transnational identity among immigrants (Block 2009; Byrd Clark 2009). Several studies have examined the experiences of 1.5 generation migrants (e.g. Benesch 2008; Kim and Duff 2012; McKay and Wong 1996; Yuzefova 2012). However, there are still very few studies that focus on the formation of transnational identity among the recent 1.5 generation migrants from Eastern Europe and the Baltic States.

The origins of the concept of '1.5 generation migrants' – children born in their country of origin but who emigrated during their childhood – can be traced back to Rumbaut (1976) who identified 1.5 generation migrants in the USA as children born in Cuba who migrated while still young with their parents to the USA.

Scholars emphasise that the transnational identity formation in 1.5 generation migrants is different from the identity formation in first generation migrants who emigrated as adults, and also second generation migrants, that is, those children born to migrant parents who have settled into a new country. At the same time, the research emphasises that the younger a 1.5 generation child is, the more similar their experiences of adaption and integration into a new host country will be to second generation children. According to Awokoya (2012), the younger a child is when they arrive in a new host country, the faster their integration proceeds – and the more likely that their choice of language will be that of the new country rather than the

mother tongue. This is related to the child's limited proficiency in their mother tongue and their lack of personal experience of the home country and memories as evidence of immersion in the culture. Other factors include their low level of socialisation in the society of the country of origin, and their active inclusion in the education system that is the most institutionalised institution of their new country of settlement (Awokoya 2012; Lulle and Klave 2015).

Asher and Case (2008) argue that the concept '1.5 generation migrants' reflects the situation of the generation of migrants who are 'in between' – a hybrid generation which does not exclusively identify with or belong to either their country of origin or the country of settlement. The authors agree with the view of Goldschmidt and Miller (2005) that the 1.5 generation belongs to two cultural fields: the field of national identity, values and attitudes of their country of origin, usually experienced at home, and the cultural field of their new country, experienced at the school they attend. As a result they face a challenge: the need to adapt to the culture of their country of settlement while still being integrated into the culture of their country of origin (Berry 1997). Children who were brought up in a pluralistic society often become 'bi-cultural'. They apply values, attitudes and behavioural models that are characteristic of both their country of origin and country of settlement (Phinney and Rotheram 1987). The 1.5 generation children and youths often function 'in between' two cultures, as it were: they speak two languages and balance between two sets of values (Asher and Case 2008; Carhill et al. 2008; Singhal 2004).

Other authors emphasise the dominance of the language and national identity of the new country of settlement in the national identities of 1.5 generation migrant children, and the supporting role of education in the formation of a transnational identity. Socialisation through education facilitates stronger ties with the new culture. Thus Roberge (2003) argues that if the 1.5 generation migrants emigrated when they were young, they have been socialised in the school abroad and have learned the language of the country of settlement, which can become dominant. Consequently, even if they identify with their language of origin, they might still use the language of the country of settlement more.

Yet the 1.5 generation migrants face challenges that are unique to their generation. During the critical stages of the development of their own personality and identity, they have to develop a sense of belonging.

It can be argued that the 1.5 generation migrants choose their national identity. They define it and present it to others through their language. Research shows that national identity and language are strongly related and that identity is constructed through language, as emphasised by Byrd Clark (2012). The development of a national identity occurs in parallel with social integration and the acquisition of language. By learning the language of their country of settlement, migrants can internalise its values, traditions and culture more successfully, thus increasingly becoming an integrated member of that society and sharing a collective identity.

Research shows that other people perceive and identify the 1.5 generation migrants depending on how these migrants identify themselves and which language they use. Often these young people feel closer to their new friends and schoolmates

from the country of settlement than with their contemporaries from their country of origin. As they speak the language, these children and young people increasingly identify themselves with their country of residence and its culture (Heller 1987; Liang 2006).

Yet knowing and using two languages is also associated with some communication difficulties. Pavlenko (2011) suggests that migrant children who have to use two languages – one at home and another at school – often have difficulties expressing themselves verbally. A perfect knowledge of language is not sufficient; part of the process of choosing words and formulating one's thoughts is dependent on significantly deeper emotional intelligence skills (Yang 2010). Consequently, migrant children may not be able to express aspects of the inner worlds that characterise their identity if they do not know how to describe it; either in their mother tongue or in the new language. Huss (2008) argues that the adaptation to new language occurs at the expense of losing one's mother tongue. The 1.5 generation migrants choose mostly to use the language of their new country of settlement as the dominant language. For example, Cummins (2000) observed that for young migrant children English becomes their dominant language in day-to-day conversations within 2 years of arrival, and the dominant language in learning and education within 4–7 years. This is accompanied by the loss or significant reduction of the mother tongue.

According to previous research, the parental effect on mother tongue usage policy at home is one of the most important factors to maintain the national identity of the country of origin. Often parents want their children to retain their mother tongue and the values, traditions and customs of their country of origin (Phinney et al. 2001). Also, parents manifesting their belonging to a certain culture can influence the values, attitudes and perception of the national identity of their children (Phinney et al. 2001). Unfortunately, national identity and belonging create conflicts between parents and children, for example if the children want to adapt more quickly and develop stronger ties to the culture of the country of settlement (Rosenthal 1987). On the other hand, migrant parents often want their children to excel in their education, which requires a good knowledge of the language of the country of settlement. Such conflicting parental messages create frustration and challenges for the 1.5 generation migrants.

Rosenthal (1987) has also observed an interesting cross-over effect: while the 1.5 generation children become only partial users of their mother tongue, their parents often remain only partial users of English. Often, while parents talk at home in their mother tongue, their children respond to them in English (Kasnitz et al. 2009).

Therefore, this paper aims to investigate how the parents of 1.5 generation children from Latvia see the formation of transnational identity among their children. It focuses in particular on the retention and development of the languages that children use at home and at school, and it questions whether we can talk about transnationalism in relation to the 1.5 generation migrants from Latvia. Are they truly 'transnational'? That is, are they maintaining and developing language ties both to their country of origin and the country of settlement?

### 7.3 Methods

In order to investigate parents' perspectives on the formation of transnational identity among 1.5 generation migrants we used semi-structured interviews ( $n = 16$ ) with parents of children who were born in Latvia but now live in England. The aim of the interviews was to investigate how emigrant families who want to retain their links with Latvia facilitate their children's ties with their country of origin. All names have been changed.

Participants for the interviews were selected using four criteria. Firstly, we focused on the most recent waves of emigration, in other words, those families that left Latvia after 2000. Secondly, in order to be able to investigate how the transnational identity of children develops over time, we selected only those families who had lived in England for at least 3 years. Thirdly, only families that had at least one child born in Latvia living with them in England were selected. Finally, families who were determined to maintain their links to Latvia were selected. This criterion was fulfilled by conducting interviews with parents who took their children on a regular basis (at least once a month) to Latvian supplementary schools in England. These schools are considered to be a significant agent in preserving the Latvian language, culture and national identity of the diaspora (Lulle and Klave 2015).

Potential participants were informed about the aims of the project. Most of the interviews were conducted either at the supplementary school while a participant's children were engaged in learning activities or at their home. In nearly all cases both parents in the two-parent families in the sample were available for the interview. When selecting research participants, we aimed to achieve diversity in the sample in terms of the household composition. The sample included four single parent and 12 two-parent families. The number of children per family varied between one and four and the age of children varied between 1 and 16 years. In terms of occupational status, approximately one third of the sample worked in a professional role, one third in administrative and sales jobs and one third in semi-skilled or unskilled sectors.

To analyse the interviews, we used a thematic coding approach. First we identified the units of analysis, then grouped them according to themes (Strauss and Corbin 1998). The results of the study presented in this paper identify tendencies in transnationalism that might be common to a broader range of Latvian emigrants and their children, and possibly similar trends are likely to be observed in similar contexts.

### 7.4 Findings

It should be noted that in *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey parents with children mentioned that in general they wanted their children to preserve the Latvian language and thus their sense of national belonging to Latvians and Latvia. The data of *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey show that the vast majority (85%)

of those Latvian emigrants with children who spoke Latvian in their family while living in Latvia continue to do so when living in the UK. Most parents (70%) also pointed out that it was important for them that their children were either fluent in the Latvian language (50%) or at least understood it (20%). For a fairly large number of emigrants – a little more than a quarter (27%) – it did not matter if their children were able to communicate in the Latvian language.

At the same time, there is a reverse tendency for Latvian emigrants to identify themselves with the current home country, and not with Latvia and Latvians. According to the UK Population Census 2011, out of 6088 children under the age of 18 living in the UK with at least one parent whose national identity is Latvian, almost half the children or their parents ( $n = 2978$ ) identified the child's national identity as one of the UK identities (British, English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish, Cornish). Slightly more than a third of the respondents ( $n = 2126$ ) noted that their national identity was Latvian, while 3% expressed a dual identity of both the UK and Latvia and 13% indicated "other identities" (ONS 2015). These statistics demonstrate that the number of emigrant children identifying with the new home country is gradually increasing.

The findings of this qualitative research suggest that the formation of 'belonging' and 'transnational identity' is particularly shaped by two main factors: parental strategies in dealing with the use of two or more languages in everyday communication and the child's first experiences at school and of learning the English language.

### ***7.4.1 Parental Influences on the Formation of Transnational Identity in Children***

Although this study restricted itself to families determined to maintain their ties with their country of origin, only a few of them said they insisted on speaking Latvian at home as an affirmation of belonging to Latvia and 'Latvians'. This was despite the difficulties their children experienced in maintaining their mother tongue. For example, Maria and Peter who have three children and have lived in England for 4.5 years insist that only Latvian is spoken at home:

At home nobody speaks any other language [than Latvian]. We are Latvians. [...] Sometimes the children sign in English. [...] The oldest son sometimes does not know how to say something in Latvian, so he says it in English, but very rarely – just a word or so.

This is one example of a family in which the parents are determined to maintain their own national identity and that of their children, and they see language as a very important part of maintaining and confirming this identity.

Like other Latvian migrant families with this strong sense of national belonging, Maria and Peter are critical of families that do not use Latvian at home:

I know a family that have a Latvian child – David – who does not speak Latvian. I do not want my child to speak English at home; we will never speak English at home. He [our son]

does not have a choice because nobody will speak with him differently. My brother lives in Ireland. Seven or eight years already, I don't know. [...] and that mother [her brother's partner] really wants them all to be Irish.

Migrant parents therefore have the complex task of persuading their children to speak Latvian in everyday life and maintaining a sense of belonging to Latvia, while also helping them learn English and develop a sense of belonging to England, to help the children form a transnational identity.

Research participants also observed that as their children's use of English increased in everyday communication, even those born in Latvia slowly forgot their mother tongue, adapted English grammar in Latvian or even refused to use Latvian at home, especially if corrected when they made mistakes. One mother, Alise, who has a daughter and a son and has lived in England for 4 years, told this story about her son:

He knows that he is a Latvian, that he lives in England. [...] Once he hung a note on his door: 'Do not come into my room. I do not understand Latvian'. That was a while ago. It was quite terrible: he was very, very angry about something. I think he didn't understand one word and somebody laughed about it or something, and that hurt him very much, I think. After that event Latvian for him is a little bit ...' [related to negative experiences and he does not use it as often].

Some respondents report incidents when their children have asked them not to speak Latvian when their friends are around because they feel ashamed. Maria mentioned that 'Sometimes at school I feel that the older [boy] is a bit ashamed. He says: "Do not speak to me in Latvian. My schoolmates are listening."' Liang (2006) and Heller (1987) explain this as the tendency of migrant children to distance themselves from their mother tongue in order to assimilate into their new community. The findings from this study indicate that such tendencies can also be found among the 1.5 generation migrant children from Latvia.

Sometimes maintaining the Latvian part of their children's transnational identity is motivated by the instrumental interests of the parents. Some parents emphasise that their main motivation of retaining a certain level of Latvian language skills is not simply to maintain a sense of national belonging, but because of more rational factors. The parents themselves find it easier to speak in Latvian and also they want their children to be able to communicate with their grandparents and other relatives back in Latvia.

Mass media and the use of social media play an important part in the formation of national identity among migrant children. Research shows that using various information sources and media in their native language positively influences the maintenance and development of the language of the country of origin, and their ties with it (Benesch 2008; Kivisto 2001). Some of the parents in the sample have attempted to immerse their children in the Latvian information field: they download and buy animation films, books and magazines in Latvian or ask relatives from Latvia to send them. However, they have observed that the children have to be encouraged repeatedly to use them.



There is also an age correlation. The younger the children were when they arrived in England, the more passive their use of Latvian media was. However, this study finds that despite parental efforts, children might not use these outlets, and consequently these sources might play a limited role in the formation of transnationalism.

Most parents participating in this study emphasised their support for both their children's integration into the local community and for maintaining their Latvian language and national identity. Thus, it could be argued, they were supporting the formation of their children's transnational identity. At the same time parents also expressed concerns about their loss of the Latvian language.

The interviews suggest that parents have used different strategies and methods to help their children learn English; for example, involving children in after-school clubs and using support available from their school. Some families began to talk to their children in English, especially when noticing that they are experiencing difficulties with English spellings or pronunciation. For example, Rita and Andris, who have two children and have lived in England for 8 years, admitted that:

In our family we speak in mixed languages – both English and Latvian [...] When he [the child] began his schooling, he didn't know English at all, so I started to speak English at home to help him so that when he goes to school he understands something, at least. Now as a result he speaks more English than Latvian.

This example indicates that parental support for learning English in the form of using English at home can foster either the formation of a transnational identity or the national identity of the host country, although parents also acknowledge that after a while they realise that actively helping their children learn English has had a negative effect on maintaining and developing their mother tongue of Latvian (as cautioned by Pavlenko 2011; Yang 2010).

Ansis, who had lived with his partner and child in England for 4 years, observed that their mother tongue is becoming their daughter's second language because everyday experiences at school and with friends happened in English, and therefore they were often discussed in English at home:

Our daughter learned two languages in parallel: actually, she learned more English than Latvian, and therefore she has no strong grounding in Latvian. That is a bit of a problem. It would have been better, I think, if she would have had a strong foundation in Latvian, although it is difficult to tell. At home we speak Latvian. Our daughter has a problem if she wants to tell us about what she does at school or with her friends, because that happens in English and many things related to it are in English. She does not know enough Latvian words to say it in Latvian.

Parents themselves also acknowledge that sometimes they do not know the Latvian words for new toys or games. Increasingly, therefore, English enters communication between parents and children.

These findings are similar to those of Pavlenko (2011) that children develop their vocabulary in the language of the country of settlement and do not seek new words to describe their experiences in their mother tongue. This could be especially common among children who emigrated while still very young, indicating that even if a



child forms a transnational identity his or her connections with the country and language of origin could weaken over time.

### ***7.4.2 First Experiences at School and Learning the English Language as Factors Influencing the Formation of Transnational Identity***

The interview data suggest that first experiences at an English school play a crucial role in learning English and successfully adapting to and integrating into the new country of settlement.

Anna, a divorced mother who has lived in England for 5 years, has two underage children and one adult daughter. Her daughter was 14 when they arrived in England. She shared an experience of her daughter's successful adaptation to school and acquisition of the English language, emphasising a migrant-friendly and supportive environment at the school in England her children attended:

My daughter was very happy. From the first day she was excited that everybody was greeting her, asking 'What is your name, where are you from?' and hugging her. She said the attitude and the relationships were so different from when she went to school in Latvia, where either nobody speaks to each other or talks about each other behind their backs. Her English was not good, but she was diligent and adapted [that is, she learned English and did well in the school].

Similar positive experiences were reported by Marta, a mother of two children, who had separated from her partner. She had lived in England for 8 years and emphasised her daughter's openness to change that helped her integrate into the school successfully, despite an initial lack of English language skills:

We never had any problems at school. She adapted within the first two weeks. I said to the teacher: 'If there are any problems, call me!' [...] She did not know any English at all, but she adapted. Seven years old, ideal, no problems at all. [...] And after three months she knew English so well that I was sitting and thinking "I lived here for how many years? ... four? ... and I don't know it so well.

In contrast, Maria and Peter, who had lived with their three children in the United Kingdom for 4.5 years, acknowledged that their first few weeks in the country were difficult for their son. He was five when he started at school:

Our child had many more problems that we did, at the beginning. He didn't speak at all. [...] He had to go to school three days after our arrival. For the first year, he didn't know English. [...] Everywhere there were unfamiliar people, unfamiliar faces. I taught him a few words: what to say if he is in pain or needs to go to the toilet, but it was very hard for him at the beginning. He was five years old. The teacher said that he only began to speak English after a year or so. He just kept silent. He made some friends after a year....very slowly.

This example indicates a slower and more challenging process of learning English as part of the formation of a transnational identity. Later in the interview,

Maria and Peter explained that, despite these initial difficulties, their son eventually became fluent in English. He is now using both Latvian and English when communicating with them and his siblings at home.

The interview data thus indicate that schooling experiences in the new country of settlement are important for forming a transnational identity, acquiring the language of the new host country and forming a sense of belonging and social integration. These findings are in line with other studies that also found that the first experiences in the new country of settlement – and experiences at school in particular – significantly affect the formation of identity and belonging among 1.5 generation migrants (Awokoya 2012). As Awokoya's study was conducted in a different social context (involving 1.5 generation Nigerian migrant children and youths) the similarities in the findings indicate that the role of school experiences in the process of transnational identity formation could be significant in a variety of social contexts in terms of language and belonging.

The findings also uncovered the first signs of the cross-over effect described by Rosenthal (1987). Marta's daughter learned the language of the host country faster than her mother, which might indicate that transnational identity is formed faster in child migrants than in migrant parents.

### ***7.4.3 Interaction with Other Latvian Children in Emigration and Transnational Identity Formation***

Migrant supplementary schools play an important role in forming and maintaining a Latvian identity and ties with Latvia as part of a transnational identity. Migrant supplementary schools are usually organised and run by parents themselves on a voluntary basis and are open once or twice a month on Saturdays or Sundays. The services offered by these schools vary depending on the location, available resources and vision of the founders of the school. These schools are an opportunity for Latvian migrant children and parents to meet other children and to learn about Latvian history and traditions. However, according to the official data, only a relatively small proportion of migrants with children attend such schools (Kārkliņa and Kamerāde 2016; NIPSIPP 2015). Several parents said that supplementary schools are not a priority for them. If children happen to have other activities at that time or a school is too far away, they do not attend them.

The opinions and experiences of parents whose children do attend these schools differ as to how they can help them form transnational identities. This may depend on which school their child attends or on the parents' own expectations of what the school should or should not be offering.

Some parents welcome the school's role in teaching language and traditions, but do not like it becoming a play school. While the original focus of the school was on Latvian history and traditions, if it becomes more engaged in organising entertain-

ment activities and events the parents say its influence on maintaining national identity decreases.

Parents like Rita and Andris say they have seen children in Latvian supplementary schools speaking English among themselves, and they are critical:

We attend a Latvian supplementary school in [a certain city] and keep in touch with one family who live in [name of city]. I don't know about [how much] learning [is done] but [it's good for the kids] to meet and hear Latvian, to learn ... just to communicate]. Although I have to say most children that come here [to the supplementary school] do not speak Latvian. They speak English to each other.

Some research participants were sceptical about the long-term effects of Latvian supplementary schools in maintaining Latvian language and identity. They say these schools are more oriented towards pre-school and primary school age children, while teenagers refuse to attend them because they find them 'boring'. This finding indicates that as children grow older the role of migrant supplementary schools diminishes as a factor affecting the formation of transnational identities.

Summer camps for diaspora children are often aimed at forming and maintaining Latvian identity and ties with Latvia. Inga is married with two children and has lived in England for 11 years. Like several other parents in the sample, she expressed concerns that these camps were not well suited to their needs because they were organised mostly when their children are still at school or when the parents themselves did not have holidays.

Some participants reported that, in contrast to what might be expected, communicating and interacting with other Latvian children living in emigration did not help the 1.5 generation to maintain their mother tongue. Parents often mentioned that Latvian children began to communicate with each other in English and that parents often had to remind them to speak Latvian. Alise, who had lived with her partner and two children in England for 4 years, noted:

We often have to remind them: "Speak to your sister and your cousin's children in Latvian". They prefer to speak English. They [can] speak Latvian, but they need reminding because they use English every day. Similarly the boy, my youngest brother, he is fifteen, he has a friend, also Latvian, but as soon as they begin to talk about school, they do not know how to say it. They don't know how to explain it in Latvian.

These findings are further confirmation that the language of the country of settlement becomes dominant in the identity of 1.5 generation children – transnational or otherwise. Their mother tongue becomes a second language, spoken by family and friends.

Similar tendencies of migrant children preferring the language of their country of settlement have been observed by Cummins (2000) and Huss (2008). To sum up, our interviews with parents suggest that 1.5 generation migrants from Latvia are on the path to become transnationals or what Yang (2010) describes as 'English dominant bilinguals', characterised by two intersected and mixed but still distinguishable language-based identities.

## 7.5 Discussion and Conclusions

According to the literature, transnational identity is characterised by maintaining ties of high intensity and regularity with both the country of origin and the host country, including the retention of the mother tongue and the learning of the language of the country of settlement. The aim of this study has been to examine the parental perceptions of how these transnational ties – and especially the language ties – are developed and maintained in their children. This study questioned how the 1.5 generation migrant children from Latvia were maintaining and developing language ties both to their country of origin and the country of settlement. In particular, using in-depth interviews with 16 parents, this study focused on some of the factors affecting the formation of transnational identity, such as parental influences on language choices, a child's first experiences at school, their language use and their participation in supplementary schools and summer camps.

The results suggest that at least so far there is little evidence as to the development of a strong transnational identity among 1.5 generation migrant children from Latvia: that is, children born in Latvia who emigrated during their childhood. Instead this study observed a tendency towards integration and assimilation into the new host country, a tendency either facilitated by their parents or occurring despite their parents' efforts to maintain ties with Latvia.

Latvian 1.5 generation migrants have a tendency to become 'English-dominant bilinguals' (Yang 2010), who prefer to use English as their day-to-day communication language, often despite their parents asking them to use Latvian. Their use of language depends on the context they operate in. At home they often speak Latvian with their parents, while at school and in other situations they use English. Characteristically, in day-to-day communication Latvian is often replaced by English, a tendency also observed by Huss (2008). Initially, both languages are mixed into the same sentence. Later, even their thinking is formulated in English. Depending on the social situation, children pick and choose which part of their identity to express and present to the outside world. They may prefer to use Latvian and to be Latvian when talking to a grandmother, friends or relatives in Latvia. In turn they would use English to integrate and belong inside and outside the school and when spending time with friends, both Latvian and English, who speak English.

The sample for the present study was selected from parents whose children attend Latvian supplementary schools, on the assumption that this attendance indicated their commitment to retaining ties with Latvia and a Latvian identity. However, only a small number of the families in the sample insisted on the use of Latvian as the only language at home as a way of retaining Latvian as a language their children can speak. Most parents accepted the increasingly frequent use of English in the family, thus supporting the development of transnational identities where the English language becomes dominant. Taking into account the sample characteristics, this finding might seem puzzling or even contradictory. However, it might signal that parents are trying to balance the challenges presented by the process of

integrating into the host country while retaining ties with the country of origin at the same time. By accepting the occasional use of English at home they help their children integrate into the host country. Taking them to a Latvian supplementary school, in theory at least, helps their children keep in touch with their Latvian identity and Latvia. In this way, the parents facilitate the formation of transnational identities.

Although parents have a strong influence on the formation of the identity of their children, and may have a general understanding of their experience, their knowledge of the nuances of this experience is likely to be limited. The question remains how these 1.5 generation migrant children see themselves and describe themselves in terms of national and transnational identity. Are they Latvians? Latvians living in England? English Latvians? Latvian-English? For now, the findings from this study suggest that the transnational identity of 1.5 generation Latvian migrant children is, over time, becoming dominated by the language of the new country of settlement.

As migration expands the field of identity these findings suggest that instead of migrant children developing a new additional, supplementary national identity alongside the national identity of their country of origin, instead the identity of the country of settlement becomes dominant.

The findings of this research supplement the results of previous studies and clarify directions for the improvement of the state's educational policies and the information that should be provided to parents of children in the diaspora.

Given that the Latvian diaspora in the United Kingdom is one of the largest, we must be aware that a significant proportion of Latvian migrants in the UK have lower qualifications, are employed in average and low-skilled jobs and are not always insured. They are more likely to be segregated and live in municipalities where the standards of education in schools are not always the highest – and they do not have the skills to search for better educational opportunities for their children (Cara 2015). In this context, it is an alarming fact that children who use Latvian as the first language at home get lower grades in secondary school exams compared with other non-British children and those with English as their first language (Cara 2015; Strand et al. 2015).

All this highlights the urgent need to educate parents about the advantages of dual language usage and on the positive impact on the child's development mother tongue preservation has (Margevica-Grinberga 2015).

This will help reduce parental frustration and motivate parents to organise themselves, such as to participate in the Latvian schools and in the community to help their children developing the transnational identity formed when migrants concurrently maintain relationships of high intensity and regularity with their country of origin and country of settlement.

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## Chapter 8

# Manoeuvring in Between: Mapping Out the Transnational Identity of Russian-Speaking Latvians in Sweden and Great Britain



Iveta Jurkane-Hobein and Evija Kļave

## 8.1 Introduction

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, a number of new independent states appeared and re-appeared on the world political map. The emergence of new state borders created novel challenges for the ethnic minorities in Soviet republics. Russians were the largest ethnic group in the Soviet Union and constituted a significant ethnic minority in most Soviet republics, especially in the two Baltic republics of Estonia and Latvia. In Latvia, the proportion of ethnic Russians, Ukrainians and Byelorussians – the Russian-speaking population (Laitin 1998) – increased dramatically during the Soviet period from 12% in 1935 to 42% in 1990 (Ivlevs and Kings 2012). Russian speakers were not motivated or encouraged to learn Latvian, resulting in two co-existing linguistic groups. Although most migration within the Soviet Union was as a result of state-regulated labour mobility, to this day Russian speakers in Latvia are sometimes considered as intruders with individual responsibility for migration decisions.

In the 1990s after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the question was whether the Russian speakers in Latvia would return to their home countries (Laitin 1998). Back then, around 10% of Russian speakers from Latvia moved to Russia (Ivlevs and Kings 2012) but, to the knowledge of the authors, information about other countries of ‘return’ is unknown. However, since the end of the 1990s, following a general emigration wave from Latvia, Russian speakers have mostly migrated to Western countries. Although the scope of emigration from Latvia is large in both linguistic groups, Russian speakers emigrate more than ethnic Latvians (CSB Latvia 2015).

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Great Britain and Sweden are two of the most popular migration destinations from Latvia (Mieriņa and Koroļeva 2015). By examining 30 life histories of Russian-speaking Latvian migrants with children in Sweden and Great Britain, this study aims to analyse the formation and maintenance of the transnational identity of Russian-speaking Latvians. The analysis argues for the inclusion of an intergenerational aspect in migration studies and illustrates how the migrants' own migration patterns in addition to the migration history of their parents or grandparents create interlinked and sometimes conflicting layers of transnational identity. Epistemologically speaking, the paper uses a social constructivist approach. It examines how informants have discursively interpreted and appropriated some policies and practices which they have experienced in the processes of forming and building their identity. These include factors such as language, ethnicity, citizenship and migration.

For the theoretical framework we first use Levitt and Glick Schiller's (2004) distinction between transnational practices (or ways of 'being') and transnational identity (or ways of 'belonging'). Second, we use Hall's (1996) argument that identity is about finding similarities with the reference group and drawing boundaries from the others. In the section after, we introduce the reader to the specifics of the Latvian case in relation to its main socio-linguistic minority, the Russian speakers. We then discuss the data and methods used for this study. In the analysis, we distinguish the three main processes of identity formation:

1. Aspiring to a Latvian identity;
2. Claiming an unrecognised Russian-speaking Latvian identity; and
3. Developing transnational non-belonging.

## 8.2 Literature Review

### 8.2.1 *Transnational Identity: Being and Belonging, Being Similar and Being Different*

The current study contributes to the literature of transnationalism (Basch et al. 1994), as well as the literature of the transnational social field (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004; Glick Schiller 2005) and of identity formation.

The transnationality approach to migration studies allows shifting away from bipolar identities where identifying with one group excludes belonging to the other, such as Latvians and Russians, those who stayed and those who emigrated. Instead, transnationalism offers a wider perspective where one place is not opposed to the other but linked in multiple ways (Bradatan et al. 2010). Personal experiences, individual practices and intergenerational narratives link places and spaces at different times and to geographical scales creating transnational social fields. Hall (1996,

p. 4) argues that ‘identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions’.

Given that the inflow of people from the Soviet Union to Soviet Latvia started in 1941 and peaked in the post-war period from 1945 to 1959 (Heleniak 2004), these Russian-speaking families have lived in Latvia for not more than one to three generations. Hence, there are several countries and territories involved in forming the identity of Russian-speaking Latvian emigrants. First, there is Latvia as their home country where, for example, their relatives and friends live, and which is possibly their place of birth. Russia also contributes to the identity formation – it is the country of what could be called ‘linguistic origin’ yet ethnic Latvians often uncritically call all Russian speakers ‘Russians’. Third, the countries of ethnic origin such as, for instance, Russia, Ukraine or Belarus, may also play a role in their identity formation. Then, for older migrants, the ex-Soviet space in general as a memory of the former Soviet Union may also play a role in identity formation. Finally, there is the new host country, their new country of residence and a place where their children may have been born and are being raised.

However, due to increased globalisation and mobility trends, we should not strictly speak only of national belonging. Migrants may not feel rooted or have a sense of belonging to any national territory, but create certain locational and situational time-space forms of belonging. Thus, the main question that this study deals with is: where do Russian-speaking Latvians feel they belong?

Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004) distinguish between transnational practices or ‘ways of being’ and transnational identity or ‘ways of belonging’, where the latter ‘refers to practices that signal or enact an identity which demonstrates a conscious connection to a particular group’ (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004, p. 1010). For example, if one eats grey peas with bacon and onions for Christmas because that is what one has always eaten for Christmas, that would translate into a way of being. But if one eats the same dish for Christmas because that is what Latvians eat for Christmas, it is a way of belonging.

Furthermore, the identities emerge and form within specific power relations and discourses (Hall 1996, p. 5). Hence, the notion of belonging or identity also implies being different from something else (Hall 1996). Social identities are both self-assigned and assigned by others – the others within and outside the boundaries of the group one claims to belong to. Drawing on the case of Russian speakers in newly established post-Soviet republics, Laitin (1998) argues that social identities are contested especially when social groups become incoherent. Then, according to Laitin (1998, p. 16), ‘self-appointed boundary-keepers arise to redefine these categories so that rules of inclusion and exclusion, as well as the behavioural implications of belonging to this or that category, can be clarified’. Due to the scheme that granted citizenship to the descendants of the citizens of interwar Latvia, it was mostly ethnic Latvians who, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, gained decision-

making power. By studying the transnational sense of belonging of Russian-speaking Latvian migrants in Sweden and Great Britain, this study will analyse the transnational identity of a migrant group who were part of an ethnic minority group in their home country and who, after migration, are again part of a minority group in their new host country.

While some research has been conducted on the national identities of Russian-speakers in post-Soviet states (e.g., Laitin 1998; Poppe and Hagendoorn 2001), very little is known about the identities of Russian-speaking migrants from post-Soviet countries – including Latvia – who chose to migrate to Western Europe. Results from the few studies on Russian-speaking Latvian emigrants are somewhat contradictory. Ivlevs (2013) and Ivlevs and Kings (2012) showed that Russian speakers have higher emigration intentions compared to ethnic Latvians. Explaining the higher percentage of Russian-speaking emigrants, Ivlevs (2013) and Ivlevs and Kings (2012) made reference to language and citizenship policies in Latvia.

A forward-thinking article by Hughes (2005) uses a similar argument. However, Aptekar (2009) in her study based on in-depth interviews with Russian speakers from Estonia and Latvia in Ireland argued that socio-economic conditions and not the ethnic, language or citizenship situation are the emigration drivers for Russian speakers from Latvia. Furthermore, the study of Lulle and Jurkane-Hobein (2016) illustrates how Russian speakers from Latvia strategically mobilise their unique social and cultural capital of having a European passport and speaking one of the very ‘marketable’ languages, i.e. Russian. Apart from the research mentioned above, this is, to the best knowledge of the authors, one of the first studies focusing on this linguistic group, namely Russian speakers from post-Soviet countries in Western Europe, and to study the group’s sense of national belonging.

### ***8.2.2 Russian Speakers in Latvia Explained***

Smith (1991 in Bradatan et al. 2010) argued that the prevalent model of nation in Eastern Europe is the ethnic model; that is, the nation as a ‘community of common descent.’ In the ethnic model of ‘nation’, it is hardly possible to become a new member of the nation. Latvia could be seen as an example of an ethnic nation (Gruzina 2011). Already at the end of the 1980s, but especially after the collapse of the USSR, legal rights and the legal status of Russian-speaking residents and the Russian language were re-framed in Latvia. In 1995, the status of ‘non-citizen of Latvia’ was introduced and given to those who could not acquire Latvian citizenship granted through descent. Most of these people were Soviet immigrants to Latvia and most were Russian speakers. Although the status was meant to be temporary, Rozenvalds (2010) argues that the nearly non-existent and inefficient integration policy towards non-citizens indicates the political expectation that Russian speakers would

emigrate. Although the position of non-citizens is considered closer to that of citizens than of other foreign nationals or stateless persons (Brands Kehris 2010), non-citizens have no voting rights and face restrictions with regard to a number of professional occupations, mostly in the public sector. As non-citizens are not citizens of the European Union, their free movement within the EU is limited. For example, non-citizens are required to apply for a visa for travel to the UK.

Today, about 36% of the Latvian population has Russian as their mother tongue and about 14% of Latvians remain non-citizens (CSB Latvia 2012). Although Russians among Russian speakers form the biggest ethnic group, there are also Ukrainians, Poles and Byelorussians among them. The interpretation of twentieth century history and recognition of the Soviet occupation continues to be problematic between Latvian and Russian speakers (Gruzina 2011; Tabuns 2010), although Cheskin (2012) argues that younger Russian-speakers have a more nuanced view on history by being exposed to both discourses.

Media consumption and voting behaviour in Latvia still depends to a large extent on the individual's linguistic background, that is, either Latvian or Russian (Šulmane 2010), while the political leadership is mostly ethnically Latvian. For example Harmony Centre, a political party drawing support mostly from a Russian-speaking electorate, has never held power in the government due to the fear of Russia's potential influence over the party: an alliance of so-called 'Latvian parties' keeps Harmony out of power. Harmony Centre gained the most votes in the last three parliamentary elections (CVK 2011, 2014), and holds 23 out of the 100 seats in the Latvian parliament, or Saeima, which is not enough to form a majority. Its alliance with the United Russia party of Vladimir Putin (The Baltic Times 2015) causes political concern in Latvia.

To conclude, Russian speakers from Latvia may have a less pronounced sense of belonging to Latvia as their home country. This study will seek to understand if the above-mentioned additional push-factors to emigrate, e.g. the lack of an effective integration policy in Latvia, make the Russian-speaking Latvians abroad develop a sense of transnational belonging to their countries of ethnic origin. Do they, for instance, aim at prompt integration in the new host country, identify themselves with their country of ethnic origin (e.g. Russia, Ukraine, Belarus), or still identify themselves with Latvia? Before exploring this question, we will describe the methods and data used for the analysis.

### 8.3 Methodology

As information about Russian-speaking migrants from Latvia is scarce, an explorative qualitative research design was used involving collecting the life histories (Miller 2000) of the migrants. The method of life histories intends to cover the

informant's whole life rather than focus just on the present situation. Thus, this approach allows for analysing how Latvia's complicated recent history including Soviet occupation, national revival, independence, Latvia's accession to the EU, waves of immigration and emigration, personal migration experience etc., has been experienced and narrated by Russian-speaking Latvians.

The study draws on 30 in-depth interviews with Russian-speaking Latvians in Sweden and Great Britain. Eighteen interviewees were from Sweden and 12 were from the UK. All interviewees, 7 of them men and 23 of them women, were parents to at least one minor. The age of the study participants varied between 28 and 42 years, with the median being 35. The time that the interviewees had lived in Sweden or the UK varied between half a year and 22 years, the median being 8 years.

The interviews were collected during summer 2014 and were conducted by the first author of this chapter. The length of the interviews was on average between 60 and 90 min. The interviewee could choose the language of the interview. Thus, five interviews were conducted in Latvian and 25 in Russian. The interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed. Typically, the interview started with questions about the place and year of birth, ethnicity of parents, memories from childhood, schooling and adolescence then slowly moving towards the decision to emigrate, with questions about the social integration experiences in Sweden and Great Britain, new social networks and links with Latvia.

For the recruitment of the interviewees, a wide range of channels were used, including the use of networks of friends and acquaintances, social networks, Facebook groups and forums for Russians in Sweden and the UK and in some cases also snowball sampling.

Despite the recruiting efforts, the interviewer experienced difficulties in the recruiting process. There might be three main reasons for this difficulty. Firstly, many emigrants from Latvia distrust the Latvian state (Mieriņa 2015; Lulle 2014, p. 129) regardless of their ethnicity. Secondly, the interviewer herself is an ethnic Latvian, and non-Latvians from Latvia may not trust a Latvian who is searching for Russian speakers in particular. Thirdly, the fieldwork was conducted during the time when the military conflict in Eastern Ukraine started and the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation had just happened. Thus, at the time of the fieldwork, the questions of ethnicity and language were especially sensitised.

Distrust as the main explanation of complications in collecting data is also confirmed by the fact that half the informants were recruited through the snowball sampling method and with the help of friends and acquaintances. Furthermore, only one non-citizen of Latvia was recruited. Contact was established with another non-citizen, but after several attempts to re-schedule the interview, the potential interviewee did not respond to phone calls or text messages on the agreed day of the interview. In addition to the trust issues mentioned above, there may be other reasons for the low number of non-citizens in the sample. As they are not EU citizens it is more difficult for non-citizens to migrate for work to other EU countries. If they do get work abroad, according to other interviewees, they often work illegally and thus may not trust people outside their social circles.

Self-selection of the sample could be considered as one of the limitations of the research design applied for this study. There were only two informants in the sample who quite clearly and openly identified themselves with Russia and what could be called 'Russianness': Russian culture (music, films, literature) or Russian events (for example, interest in attending Russian balls). On the one hand this could indicate that sentiments of 'relating to Russia' are rather marginal among Russian-speaking Latvians. One of them emigrated in 1992 and, thus, has hardly lived in the Latvian state following the restoration of independence. On the other hand it could mean that those who identify themselves with Russia were not willing to take part in interviews conducted by an ethnic Latvian. There is therefore a necessity for further research to make, contest or strengthen the claims of this study. Future studies could diversify recruitment channels further and involve Russian speakers as interviewers or use local interviewers who could be perceived as being more neutral than ethnic Latvian interviewers.

The main interview questions analysed for the purpose of this article were as follows:

- How do you self-identify; where do you belong; how do you feel – who are you?
- Do you feel at home in your host country? Did you feel at home in Latvia? Who are your friends in the host country?
- Do you take part in Latvian or Russian diaspora activities, and why? Is there something that you miss about Latvia and why? Do you follow news about Latvia and why?
- Would you consider taking the citizenship of your host country and why? Would you keep Latvian citizenship and why?

In the analysis procedure, several transcribed interviews were inductively and thematically coded and then the remaining interviews were coded using the established code frame. Throughout the interview analysis attention was paid to the national identities the interviewees ascribed to themselves and the identities they felt were ascribed to them by others.

## 8.4 Findings

### 8.4.1 *Transnational Identity of Russian-Speaking Latvian Emigrants*

What one 'does' does not necessarily translate into who one 'is'. Many of the activities that the interviewees described could be translated into ways of being 'Swedish' or 'British' but that does not make them feel like they belong to Sweden or the UK. In many ways they are integrated in the host society yet they feel that as first generation immigrants they will never be fully 'Swedish' or 'British' even if, with time, they start to take part in Swedish or British traditions, such as observing local



holidays or including local food in their diet. Nevertheless, their attitudes towards Sweden or the UK as the new host country are positive as it provides them with a platform to start a new life, with economic stability and with a place to raise their children. Not identifying as Swedish or British can also be explained by the fact that, with the exception of one, all of them had lived longer in Latvia than in their new host country. Thus, their identity claims may change with time.

The new host countries, however, are considered to be the homeland of their children who, in the opinion of the interviewees, will grow up being Swedish and British. Hence, the sense of national belonging is experienced as being innate: while they themselves do not feel the entitlement of being Swedish or British, their children should and would. Likewise, because they are born and raised in Latvia, they belong to Latvia – but their children do not. This argument demonstrates the importance of one's own individual experiences in claiming identity, rather than the experiences of parents.

However, when it comes to language choices for the children of Russian-speaking Latvian emigres living abroad, the local language and Russian are considered the most important; strategically as well as for their identity (Jurkane-Hobein 2015). Language is a strong attribute of one's identity claims. Preservation of the Latvian language and the Latvian language being something that defines who a Latvian 'is', have been and remain vivid in Latvian discourse in Latvia. The Russian language on the other hand, as the name suggests, is what defines Russian speakers.

Thus, in the following sections we will focus mostly on how these emigrants balance and negotiate between their Latvian and Russian identities.

### 8.4.2 *Aspiring to a Latvian Identity*

Like their peers in Latvia (SKDS 2015), the vast majority of the Russian-speaking Latvian emigrants interviewed did identify themselves with Latvia. Latvia remains their homeland; their parents, relatives and friends may still live there and they have mostly sweet memories from their childhood, adolescence or adulthood in Latvia with its places, tastes and mentality. These are common feelings shared with their fellow Latvian emigrants. However, their belonging to Latvia is not 'obvious' by such identifiers as their given name – which tends to have Russian origins. Nor can they easily be identified as Latvian by their language, as their mother tongue is Russian. This identity dilemma is brought into focus with relation to an ice hockey game by Alexander, a man in his 30s who has lived in the UK for 10 years: 'Deep in my heart, of course, I feel Latvian. Yes. Because when the ice hockey championships take place, I support the Latvian team even if they play against Russia. Even though everyone considers me Russian.'

For Alexander it is clear that he is cheering for Latvia, yet it is not so obvious for others. Even though the Russian speakers may identify themselves with Latvia and



Latvians, the ‘pure Latvians’ – a term used by one of the next interviewees to describe ethnic Latvians – draw a boundary between ethnic Latvians and Russian-speaking Latvians. Moreover, around half of the interviewees could recall situations in which they or their close relatives were accused of belonging to the Russian-speaking minority. Yana, who migrated to Sweden in 1997, describes here how the Latvian language became the main marker of being accepted by Latvian society, or isolated from it.

Let’s be frank, it [Latvia] is my homeland. I was born there; I don’t have anything against it. I understand it all, but the attitude [there] was not the best. I understand that, yes, they wanted me to speak Latvian but unfortunately my friends were all Russians. [I went to] Russian school. I couldn’t do anything about it. At work, all the Latvians spoke Russian to me. Yes, they spoke Russian. So how was I to learn [Latvian]?

In the extract above, Yana is sympathetic to the expectation for her to speak Latvian, but she also stresses her limited opportunities to learn the language. The clash of expectation versus possibility is especially well illustrated in relation to the situation in Sweden where all immigrants are given the chance to have free Swedish language classes. While a number of other interviewees also identified language as being the main barrier to being accepted as Latvian, this next interviewee – Svetlana, a Russian-Ukrainian – has very vivid memories of being ‘othered’ during her study years in the mid-1990s, despite being proficient in Latvian:

For instance, at university I was the only Russian. There were girls who were half-Russian – they related to me. The pure Latvians didn’t. They were afraid. In fact, I had problems with that because in the last year [of study] those who related to me were told to choose: either relate to me or to get the study certificate.

Svetlana indicates the degrees of ‘otherness’ apparent in the context of the 1990s towards those considered ‘Russian’ or ‘half-Russian’ as opposed to ‘pure Latvian’ where the ‘half-Russians’ could capitalize on their mixed identities by choosing which side to take. Although Svetlana’s story brings us to the 1990s, a time that could be described as the most tense time ethnically in the recent history of Latvia (Laitin 1998) because of the temporal proximity of the Soviet years in Latvia, those who grew up in later years could also recollect unpleasant memories. Karina, who has Latvian and Russian-speaking parents and a Russian-speaking husband, recounts an episode from her own family setting:

My Grandpa is Latgalian [Latgale is the eastern region of Latvia]. In the last year before emigrating we were at his place for Christmas. Grandpa and my husband had an argument, and he called him [my husband] ‘the Russian pig’. My own grandpa! When I explained to Grandpa that he is wrong; that I have been married to him [my husband] for 11 years, my Grandpa’s attitude was that all Russians were occupants.

These and other examples from the interviews exemplify why ‘pure’ or ethnic Latvians are suspicious of Russian-speaking Latvians who are second generation immigrants and do not internalize a Latvian identity as their ethnic and linguistic background or as the focus of their national loyalty. But equally the Russian-

speaking Latvians do not look back at their inherited ethnicity as something that ties them to Russia, Ukraine or any other countries from which their parents come.

For that reason the Russian speakers identify themselves with a distinct ethno-linguistic group and not as a part of a unified Latvian community or diaspora. Another example of the lack of perceived reciprocity in building a sense of belonging and acceptance between the Latvian state, 'pure Latvians' and Russian-speakers is the fact that Latvians and Russian-speakers abroad form parallel communities – one of which is more organised, institutionalised and recognised and the other which hardly extends one's friendship networks. Most of the interviewees did not have Latvian friends or acquaintances abroad and that was explained not by an unwillingness to befriend Latvians, but by the fact that they have never met Latvians in their new host country. Moreover, even if some of the interviewees expressed interest in events and activities organised by the Latvian diaspora or embassy, the majority did not have any information about them. For instance, the Latvian embassy in Sweden takes an active role in co-operating with Latvian diaspora organisations in hosting and co-organising diaspora events. However, the Russian-speaking Latvians interviewed for this study were mostly unaware of them.

Likewise, when dealing with the Latvian embassy in Sweden as a private individual, the first author of this article was asked a number of times if she was included on the embassy-organised e-mail list which shares diaspora-related news and information about events. However the interviewee quoted next was unaware of such a list or events despite having been to the embassy:

Resp.: I don't know anything. One probably has to sign up somewhere. I haven't been informed about it. Nobody has told me anything, so I don't know anything. I just know that during elections, you can vote at the embassy and that's what I do. [...]Int.: But would you have the interest...?

Resp.: If there was a Russian ... Latvian organisation, like there is in Russia, Canada, Toronto with many events, with the school and other things, I would, of course, attend. I would like to. I would definitely bring my children to Latvian dancing and singing [classes]. I have done that in my childhood, my relatives as well. Latvian folk dances are my favourite and no other country in the world has them alike. At least I think so. I am not indifferent to that.

Irina moved to Sweden 4 years ago: her second episode of migration. She is one of the few Latvian migrants to have used her voting rights while living abroad. Only 23,116 Latvian citizens abroad voted in the last parliamentary elections in 2014 (CVK 2014). She is also interested in Latvian folk dances that with Latvian choirs are among the most popular activities for the Latvian diaspora. Yet she does not seem to be recognised by the gatekeepers of the Latvian diaspora community as someone who may be interested.

Like many others, Irina merely acknowledged that she did not know anything about Latvian diaspora events, although she believed they were being held. As a Russian-speaking Latvian in Sweden however, Yolanda knew very well that the Latvian community was active but felt explicitly that – as a Russian speaker – she would not be welcome at Latvian diaspora events:

I don't take offence. There is the Latvian Association not far away from here. Russians from Latvia don't have anything [like that]. But we are not welcome at the Latvian Association. Such a question is out of the question! (*laughing*) (...) A Latvian friend of mine is an active member of that association, but she has never invited me to those events.

Yolanda expresses bitterness that even her Latvian friend is drawing a boundary between herself as belonging to the Latvian diaspora community and Yolanda, who does not. Furthermore, by saying 'Russians from Latvia don't have anything', it seems that the bitterness is not only about the non-acceptance of Russian-speaking Latvians by ethnic Latvians but also about the unrecognised ethno-linguistic group 'Latvian Russians'. The examples brought up by Irina and Yolanda demonstrate that their interest in Latvian diaspora activities contest the stereotype framed by 'pure Latvians' who see Russian speakers as disloyal and disinterested in Latvian culture.

However, even if a Russian-speaking Latvian is aware of diaspora events and attends them, they may not fit into the official Latvian discourse and collective memory of the history of the twentieth century that seems to be reproduced in the diaspora community. The interpretation of twentieth century history has been one of the battlefields between official Latvian and Russian state relationships, leaving little room for plurality of historical narrative. The family history of Russian speakers and official Latvian social memory may conflict – and this serves as another aspect that prevents the maintenance of an identity associated with Latvia as a mutual process. The case of Katarina, who has a Latvian mother and is fluent in Latvian but who has grandparents who were Volga Germans, illustrates this:

When you look at those [diaspora] activities: there is a church service... but we are not Catholics. We don't go to church at all. So we are not interested in the church. Or there are many activities that are repressions, commemoration days, blah, blah, blah. And that is not interesting for us either, as in my family there have been repressions as well. The only problem is that [the deportations] were in the other direction. Not *from* Latvia, but we fled *to* Latvia (*laughing*); from the other side.<sup>1</sup> As for other activities, if there is something interesting, when there are some meetings, some theatre evenings, then we go. But there are not many of those.

Katarina's comments imply that Latvian diaspora policies that aim to keep contact with Latvian nationals abroad can be of little relevance to the Russian-speaking emigrants. Even if the language were not a barrier and they were willing to take part in diaspora activities – as is the case with Karina or Irina – the Russian-speaking minority is not addressed by the religion, the maintained culture or the shared historic memory represented through diaspora community events. Although the two ethno-linguistic groups of ethnic Latvians and Russian-speakers share the same national identity, their access to diaspora activities is limited. As a consequence, without many shared touchpoints, the two internal communities that co-exist in Latvia also continue to co-exist abroad. However, to make stronger claims, more research is

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<sup>1</sup> At the beginning of the 1940s, Volga Germans were relocated to other parts of Russia. Trying to escape forced relocation, the interviewee's grandmother fled to Soviet Latvia.

necessary to understand whether this perception has objective grounds, i.e., if the diaspora activities are based on preservation of ethnic rather than national identity.

### 8.4.3 *Claiming an Unrecognised Identity*

We have illustrated examples showing that the identification of Russian-speaking Latvian migrants with Latvia as a nation and with the concept of 'Latvian-ness' is contested.

Firstly, the identity of Russian-speaking Latvians is contested by ethnic Latvians who consider them 'less legitimate' Latvians. Secondly, locals and other migrants in the host country who do not understand their origins contest their identity because, to paraphrase the informants, 'if you speak Russian, you are from Russia'. These contested identities lead to Russian-speaking Latvians tending to form network groups that are separate from the groups of ethnic Latvians abroad.

Not being able to be 'pure Latvians', the interviewees have developed an identity as 'Russian speakers from Latvia', thus distinguishing themselves from ethnic Latvians and 'Russians from Russia' (Laitin 1998). Drawing on the interviews, there are two reasons to stress the distinction: firstly, the linguistic identity that distinguishes them from Latvians and secondly, the national identity and perceived mentality that distinguishes them from Russians from Russia. The Russian-speaking Latvians interviewed are proud to be from Latvia and proud to be Russians and/or Russian speakers. They often consume popular and classical Russian culture but do not relate themselves to Russia as a state. Yana and Galina, who both currently live in Sweden, explain:

Yana: I say that I am from Latvia and that I am Russian. I am not ashamed of that. I say that with pride.

Galina: I have nothing in common with Russia. I cannot say I am a Russian from Russia. I am a Russian from Latvia; a Russian speaker, let's say. [...] And it would be silly to deny it. I am even proud that I am from the Baltic States because firstly, it sounds more Western, and now it is Europe. Now we are from the EU. We say that we are Russians from Latvia. [...] Latvia is my homeland. From Russia, I only have the language.

As Galina indicates, the only thing that connects the Russian-speaking Latvians to Russia is the language. Their knowledge of Russian, one of the major world languages, gives them access to Russian culture and access to large Russian-speaking online and offline networks for other Russian-speaking immigrants in their host country. Yet Russian-speaking Latvians clearly distinguish themselves from Russians from Russia. Their depiction of this group however was done in rather stereotypical terms, and described mostly in terms of behavioural differences. 'Russian Russians' are described as rude, bossy and something to be ashamed of. 'Russians from Latvia and the Baltic States', on the other hand, are depicted as more polite and considerate. Irina from Sweden:

I don't have any special desire to go to Russia because it is not my homeland, even if we go there sometimes. We have everything there: somewhere to live and everything, but it is dif-

difficult for me there. I am a Russian speaker, but one could say I do not fit in Russian society. Not to Russian society, but to the society in Russia.

Yana also from Sweden:

I don't like Russians. When I go to a resort, they behave horribly. I feel disgusted and ashamed.

By 'othering' themselves from 'Russian Russians' the interviewees form a distinct identity of 'Russian-speaking Latvians'. Moreover, the next quote confirms Laitin's (1998) findings regarding Russian speakers in Estonia who find themselves more similar to Estonians than to Russians, hence making it possible to apply the results to Russian speakers from Latvia as well. This interview extract is from Ekaterina from Sweden:

Resp.: [...] they have different attitude, different culture.

Int. How does it differ?

Resp.: People in Latvia do not reply as rudely, but that's how it still is there. Also, on the street, nobody will harass you [in Latvia]. At least less often than in Russia. Russia's problem is rudeness (*laughing*) that the Baltic countries don't have. That's why I have always liked Latvian people, Latvians, because they are Western-like and calm.

By stressing their Latvian origins, Russian-speaking Latvian migrants emphasise being Western European and qualitatively different from 'Russians from Russia'. Furthermore, stressing their Latvian origin as being different from Russian origins can also be beneficial in interaction with locals or fellow immigrants. Some interviewees in Sweden said that, in the hierarchy of immigrants, coming from a European and EU country is considered as being a higher position than coming from Russia, especially in the context of the escalation in tensions between Western Europe and Russia. Galina from Sweden:

It is a different question now. Because of all the events in Ukraine, here they look askew at the Russians. That's why we say that we are from Latvia. And please don't mix us up! Because they immediately think: if you are Russian, then you are from Russia, but Russia is bad. Now there are such politics here. I say, 'No, we are from the EU, like you are.' And to many that is a [convincing] argument, because then they look at you with respect. Finally!

Ekaterina from Sweden:

It is better to say that I am from Latvia, rather than from Russia. Because they don't know that Russians can be from Latvia. Latvia for them [the Swedes] is just a neighbour that [historically] was and then was not under their [Swedish] rule.<sup>2</sup> But Russia has always been their enemy.

Once again, self-identifying with a group and being accepted by that group may not go hand in hand. As Ekaterina's quote suggests, there is a lack of awareness of the existence of Russian-speaking Latvians in Western Europe. Having a clear social identity may therefore become complicated. Nastya from the UK has a similar opinion:

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<sup>2</sup>The interviewee refers to the history of Latvia where a part of present Latvia used to be under Swedish rule from 1629 to 1721.

The problem is that if you live abroad and your mother tongue is Russian, then people automatically think that you are a Russian from Russia. They don't understand the difference if I say that I speak Russian but grew up in Latvia, and that I am from an [ethnically] mixed Catholic family.

The lack of awareness of one's identity group can be experienced as problematic, especially in the context of international conflicts where people tend to take sides. Irina from Sweden previously lived in Canada. While living there she was mistakenly blamed for the military conflict breaking out between Russia and Georgia in 2008:

I say that I am from Latvia. People don't understand. In Canada, when there was the conflict in Georgia, everyone was coming to me. At that time I was managing a clinic. The patients were horrified: 'How is this possible!? Your Putin [President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin] has attacked Georgia!' I had to explain to everyone that I am not from there and that I have nothing to do with it! Why did they [even] ascribe it to me?

The quotes illustrate the complexity of contemporary identity formation where the national, ethnic and linguistic dimensions of identity are all intertwined. These identity dimensions, already contested in the home country, become re-defined and re-contested in the new host country when one's identity is placed and defined among new sets of categories.

#### 8.4.4 *Developing Transnational Non-belonging*

Analysis of the sense of belonging and transnational identity of Russian-speaking Latvians abroad showed that some of them experience ways of belonging that we have conceptualised here as *transnational non-belonging*. Transnational non-belonging is a situation in which one cannot identify with, or is not recognised as, a full member of a nation or state. Again, while some of the interviewees were consciously not developing a sense of belonging to a certain nation or state, others talked about the non-belonging that was imposed on them as they do not feel accepted by any of the national groups (Latvian, Russian, British or Swedish). The first is *being cosmopolitan*, the latter is what we define as 'involuntary non-belonging'.

The 'cosmopolitans' consciously do not develop a primary attachment to any state, territory or nation. They may have been born in Latvia, come from ethnically mixed families and now live in another country. They do not deny their ethnic or national origins, but they have realised that nationalism can be a destructive notion, and thus prefer not to develop an attachment to a single country or nation. Here, Irina from Sweden outlines her complex background:

I was born in a family where my mother is Latvian and my father is Armenian. My mum is a teacher of Latvian and German. I was sent to a Russian school, and since then, I am a cosmopolitan. [...] It's hard to say what my nationality is. I went to my Grandma's, and she always had Latvian cuisine. She made rye-bread kvass, potato pancakes and things like that. When I came home, I ate Caucasus food. My dad is Armenian and that was dominant of

course. I don't speak Armenian but we had Armenian traditions at home. Our upbringing was more in the Armenian style. Where do I belong? I am simply a cosmopolitan. At home I have Russian traditions and the Russian language. I don't know where I belong! My homeland is Latvia. I like Armenian cuisine and I like Latvian cuisine. I have been to Russia, but that's not my country.

Irina explains her cosmopolitan identity through her upbringing in an ethnically-mixed Russian-speaking family in Latvia and her previous migration experience. All these experiences have blended her ways of being and ways of belonging. On the other hand, Nikolay, who lives in the UK, sees cosmopolitanism as something 'modern and contemporary' that a new world citizen has to acquire in order to succeed:

With all the aeroplanes, the world has become small. It is the problem of post-Soviet people – because we were born, lived and died in the same city. But people live in Australia today and tomorrow they may work in New York; and they will work somewhere else after that. It is a cosmopolitan world today. That's why it doesn't matter what passport you have. I am not attached to any country. In fact, many in my contact groups don't care what passport they have.

Cosmopolitans take advantage of having a passport from a country in the Schengen Area that allows them to travel without passport controls, or an EU passport that allows them to work in the whole European Economic Zone without any problems. Having left their home country they do not develop attachments to their new host country. They see the world in transnational terms, where they and the people around them enjoy the benefits of geographical mobility.

A second group of non-belongers – all living in Sweden – are those who are *involuntarily* not able to identify themselves with a certain national group. We have discussed previously the Russian-speaking Latvians who do not feel accepted by ethnic Latvians. The identity often ascribed to them by others is that of 'belonging to Russia'. However, they neither want to be associated with Russia, nor believe that they are accepted by Russians in Russia. Alexander from the UK:

They [Russians from Russia] do not consider us as Russians. It's the same situation as here [in the UK] with people of mixed race. That is, when a mixed race man is with black people, they don't consider him as one of them. And when he is with white people [...] they don't consider him as one of them either! (*laughing*). Probably it's the same with Russian speakers in Latvia.

Nikolay from the UK:

That's the funny thing. In Russia they don't consider us Russians. When you go to Russia, they consider you a Latvian. But at home you are considered a Russian! (*laughing*).

Transnational non-belonging, as with belonging, is a matter of degree. While some, like Alexander and Nikolay, accept this as matter of fact, others experience a sense of alienation that began in Latvia and continues to be experienced in the new host country. Ekaterina from Sweden is an example of this continuous transnational non-belonging. She represents a generation of people who were prepared for an adult life in the Soviet Union but were faced with tremendous structural changes



during their adolescence that changed their status from full citizens in the Soviet Union to immigrants in their homeland:

From 1991 to 1999 [her first emigration attempt was living in Germany for 6 months in 1999], I was [like] a person overboard. (...) We, our generation, were in some kind of turbine that broke our destinies. It wasn't just me: it was everyone from the same [study] year. Unemployment, changes of conditions, the change of conditions for education, getting an apartment; everything [changed]. Everything that we were prepared for in our teenage years ... none of that happened.

Ekaterina does not feel accepted fully by the host society in Sweden either. She is aware of a glass ceiling in professional development opportunities for immigrants and has experienced it herself:

They [potential employers] refer to my [lack of] experience, but I think that the real reason is the [Russian] name. Many acquaintances say that once they change their name [this reason disappears]. ... For example, one girl changed her name from Elena to Helena and immediately she received more replies to her job applications. [...] That would be the only reason for me to go back to Latvia. But that would almost be like jumping from the frying pan into the fire. You understand? I am a foreigner here, and I am a foreigner there.

Svetlana from Sweden expresses her experiences in almost exactly the same words exchanging the notion of being 'a foreigner' to being 'an immigrant': 'I was an immigrant there, and I am an immigrant here. If I have to choose where I am an immigrant, I'd rather choose a country that I like.'

Another example of complex identity contestation caused by the migration history of his family, both voluntary and forced, is that of Pavel, another Latvian migrant living in Sweden.

Pavel is in his thirties and was born to two ethnic Latvian parents in a distant Soviet Republic. His grandparents and parents were deported there during Soviet repressions. His parents returned to Latvia after independence in 1991. Both parents are ethnic Latvians but Pavel's mother tongue is Russian. In Latvia, Pavel attended a school with teaching in Russian and after graduation could not speak Latvian. The only way to pursue a university degree in his chosen profession was to move to study in Russia. After university he moved to the country where he was born and married a local woman. When it was not possible for him to sustain his family, he moved to Latvia. After the birth of their son and the economic crisis, he moved with his family to Sweden, where he now works as a manual labourer.

While he is the child of ethnic Latvian parents, and his parents' forced migration history – deportation – fits the Latvian collective memory of the Soviet period, Pavel speaks the 'wrong' language to be considered a 'pure Latvian'. That language – and his inability to speak Latvian – has influenced the life decisions he has made. Coupled with this language issue, his whole migration, re-migration and re-emigration path has led him to a profound sense of non-belonging:

I feel I have fallen out with myself – do you understand? I don't feel that I'm fully Latvian because when I'm with my relatives I sense some kind of distance. I am an ethnic Latvian but I speak Russian without an accent. I don't feel that I'm Russian because ... I don't know why. I don't feel that I'm a Swede either, even though I'm here. So I don't know where I fit in.



To some extent it could be said that those who experienced this sense of non-belonging to Latvia most severely also carried this experience of non-belonging to their host country as well. Yet despite the feeling of not belonging to Sweden, these informants experience the status of 'immigrant' in Sweden as more legitimate because the decision to migrate there was their own. Immigrant status in Latvia was experienced as externally imposed on them, although it was not them but their parents or even grandparents who migrated to the territory that was then Soviet Latvia.

The feeling that your home country does not accept you creates rootlessness where emotional connections with the home country start to wane but an emotional attachment to the host country has not yet developed. In addition, this sense of non-belonging is heightened by Russian speakers not feeling welcomed by the Latvian diaspora community, and the lack of any institutionalised diaspora communities for Russian-speaking Latvians.

## 8.5 Conclusions

Due to the history of migration in the families of Russian-speaking Latvian migrants, each generation of the same extended family builds their own transnational identity – and in many cases that does not fully overlap with the previous generation's identity. In the case of Russian-speaking Latvian migrants different generations of the same family may have been born and raised in different countries and under different political configurations, for instance in a former Soviet Republic (providing the ethnic origin and the homeland of parents), in Soviet Latvia or Latvia as a sovereign state (the homeland of the individual); in a third country (the new host country after migration and now the homeland of the migrant's children), or a country in or outside the European Union. This chapter has demonstrated that including intergenerational angles in the identity research of migrants facilitates a deeper understanding of how they form their national identities. The study sought to illustrate the complexities in the formation and maintenance of the transnational identity of Russian-speaking migrants from Latvia who are an ethnic and linguistic minority both in their home country and in their new host country.

The analysis relied on the emigrants' point of view and showed that the migrants' own migration patterns – in addition to the migration history of their parents and sometimes even their grandparents – create interlinked and occasionally conflicting layers of transnational identity. The multi-layered intergenerational origins which include the country associated with the name of their ethnic origin (Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Poland or some other), Russia as the country associated with the language they speak, added to their home country Latvia, and their host country of immigration – Great Britain or Sweden – all include additional identity layers and, thus, complicate the migrant's identity claims.

The interview analysis provided three identity claims: aspiring to a Latvian identity, claiming an un-recognised Russian-speaking Latvian identity and developing transnational non-belonging. Identity is about doing and belonging, about being

similar and about being different. 'Belonging to Latvians' is not recognised by ethnic Latvians. 'Belonging to Russian-speaking Latvians' is not recognised by the new host society. The Russian-speaking Latvian migrants feel they have to defend their self-ascribed identities constantly and differentiate themselves from the identities ascribed to them by others, which is that of being labelled as Russians. This negotiation had already taken place in Latvia, but had to be re-contested in the fresh setting of their new host country. The ethnic (e.g., Russian or Ukrainian) and national (i.e., Latvian) identity is experienced as misunderstood by others. Thus, the strongest identity claim of Russian-speaking Latvians is linguistic; that is, belonging to the Russian-speaking community that empowers them. Being both Russian-speaking and from Latvia gives access to the Russian-speaking cultural space and to 'European-ness'. Being from Europe distinguishes them from 'Russians from Russia' on the level of identity claims as well as giving them concrete rights of intra-European mobility.

However, sometimes the clash of self-ascribed and ascribed identities results in the development of what we have defined as 'involuntary transnational non-belonging' when one does not feel accepted either by the home country or the host country. To some extent, this experience is amplified by the very fact that the sense of belonging to the home country is fading because of the time spent abroad, but the feeling of belonging to the host country is not developed yet and may change after more years in the host country. However, all respondents agreed that while non-acceptance by the host society is perceived as legitimate, non-acceptance by the home country is perceived as unfair.

As a result of the conflict between the identities that are given by others and those that are self-ascribed, the Russian-speakers interviewed for this study need to emphasise the nuanced nature of transnational identity that is more than just the dual notion of home and host country. They emphasise each generation's own accountability for their migration decisions and circumstances. Hence, in the identity claims of these Russian-speaking Latvian migrants, there is a clear tendency to distinguish between one's own migration paths and those of previous generations, which were shaped by the history around them.

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# Chapter 9

## Cultural and Media Identity Among Latvian Migrants in Germany



Laura Sūna

### 9.1 Introduction

In times of increasing migration, migrant attachment to the country of origin is often seen as negative in the society. These discourses speak about migrants forming a parallel society; of the cultural separation of migrants, and other similar issues. Media – and especially digital media – is seen as an important tool for enabling the continuation of practices maintaining the attachment of migrants to their homeland. Research on this issue has shown that such polarisation does not correspond to the reality (Akşen 2013; Bozdağ 2013; Hepp et al. 2012). Rather, this research indicates that migrants have hybrid identities and rarely speak about a cultural alienation from their country of residence. In their everyday lives migrants are confronted with questions of cultural proximity and distance in their immediate physical environments. Diverse references to the country of origin and its integration into the context of the land of residence is an everyday practice for them. Georgiou (2012, p. 871) describes this migrant reality as ‘being with distant others without being in distant places’.

This chapter seeks to describe the identity negotiation of migrants, and explore how transnational media and culture impacts the identity formation of recent Latvian-origin migrants in Germany. How do Latvian migrants in Germany feel and experience their belonging to Latvia and its culture? Do certain social and communicative practices foster this sense of belonging, while others hinder it? How deeply rooted are they in the country they live in and which cultural references are important for them? These are questions the chapter will answer based on qualitative data (interviews, network maps, media diaries) gained from the Latvian diaspora in Germany. Factors considered in this analysis include the importance of Latvian

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traditional culture, in particular the culture of ‘the choir’ and of singing (Tisenkopfs et al. 2008). The cultural policy of the Republic of Latvia in trying to re-connect with migrants abroad using traditional and popular Latvian culture will be considered.

This chapter will first discuss the theoretical concept of cultural identity and describe the role of culture and media in the process of building an identity. Information about the Latvian diaspora in Germany is provided in the second section, followed by a description of the research design of this study. In subsequent sections the author argues that culture is shaping the transnational self-perception of migrants, as it provides collective narratives of imagined common frames of references and confirms processes of cultural belonging and distinction.

## 9.2 Cultural Identity, Culture and Media

Culture – and music in particular – can be seen as a symbolic resource of modern individuals, as it is omnipresent in different contexts and forms a soundscape of the everyday for them (Bennett 2005, p. 118). Cultural identity is defined in this chapter from the perspective of cultural studies and symbolic interactionism. All in all, identity is seen as an on-going identification process (Hall 1994). This means that identities develop first in the interaction between the ‘self’ and the ‘society’ (Krotz 2003). Secondly, according to Stuart Hall’s (1994) theory of articulation, individuals rely on different discourses and meaning horizons in different contexts. Instead of defining identity as finalised, in the context of individualisation (Beck 1986) and mediation (Hjarvard 2008) it is more common to define identity as an on-going process of articulation, that is fulfilled as a communicative and contextual distinction towards different identification offers (Hepp et al. 2012). These are mediated on different levels and rely on plural cultural contexts. In the following sections the concept ‘identity’ is used not in an essentialist sense as something static but rather in the sense of it being an on-going process of the articulation of elements from different discourses. These might be national, ethnic, regional, religious, diasporic, pop-cultural or other (Hepp 2015, p. 226). Hall (1994) speaks in this context of hybrid cultural identities that rely on different discourses that are a result of the active ‘identity work’ of the individual. The hybrid identities change the ‘either... or’ perspective of the modern subject to the ‘as well as’ perspective (Hugger 2007, p. 175). This replaces the ‘excluding perspective’ – where only one, dominant identity reference is possible – with a new more inclusive perspective, involving an acceptance of different aspects of identity. Identity can rely on different apparently opposing cultural references and negotiates them in a hybridity. Hybridity is a particular characteristic of migrant identities as migrants absorb cultural contexts not only from the local country of residence but also from their country of origin and other transnational contexts (Bozdağ 2013). However, this phenomenon is not exclusive only to migrants. Besides migrant communities, the identities of other social groups can be seen as hybrid as well: adolescents, for example, go through similar processes (Hitzler and Niederbacher 2010; Sūna 2013; Vogelgesang 2006).

The construction of cultural identity, therefore, is a continuous balance. On the one hand, there is the individual's sense of self: as constructed by them and located between self-perception and their identification, possibly at various degrees, with different discourses. On the other hand, and possibly varying from one communication situation to another, is the ascription of cultural identity from outside. The process of identity-building is lifelong; applying to young people as much as the middle-aged and elderly. Scholars use the term 'doing identity' or 'identity work' (Buckingham 2008; Keupp and Höfer 1997) in order to underline the active contribution of the subject in the identity-building process. They argue that the individual adapts his or her identity all the time, depending on different social contexts and communication situations.

Most empirical work on 'doing identity' i.e. active identity formation, has been done in the field of youth studies. For example, youth cultural studies have emphasised the significance of popular music in relation to young people, noting the importance of music both as a cultural resource in the process of identity construction and as source of empowerment. Young people appropriate music in a specific way and use it as a tool to distinguish themselves collectively from other social and ethnic groups (Bennett 2005, p. 119, p. 139). Music-related activities seem to support adolescents in the developmental tasks they are facing in this life phase. In the context of music, lyrics and the musicians, individuals experience themselves and find references to their body, feelings and thoughts (Hoffmann 2009, p. 165). All these aspects become important for the articulation of migrant identity, as well as migrants using music from different contexts; perhaps to reconnect to their roots, to the country where they live or to global popular culture.

Similarly, music becomes important on the collective level of a diaspora. Hepp (2006, p. 285) defines 'diaspora' as a network of an imagined ethnic community, living outside the land they came from permanently and spread over different territories of nation states. It is based on a shared feeling of belonging to this imagined community (Sūna 2017a, b). As Bennett (2005) notes, music generates a sense of shared identity and reinforces the solidarity of the 'people of the diaspora':

The key function of music lies in its ability to readily articulate a collective sense of cultural identity. Inscribed in the musical text are a range of cultural referents which are instantly brought to life through the act of performance, dancing and singing. Participation in this musicalised enactment of collective cultural identities plays a highly important role in the lives of displaced ethnic minority groups. (Bennett 2005, p. 125)

Migration has led diaspora groups to seek ways of relocating themselves culturally in their new surroundings. As agents of cultural identity formation and community-making, culture and music are an important part of the collective identity of migrant groups. Migrants appropriate (de Certeau 1988) different frames of reference that are rooted in both national and transnational culture.

Based on empirical data, the following sections discuss different modes of migrant identity formation in the context of a mediated appropriation of culture. The concept of media appropriation as introduced by Michel de Certeau (1988) describes the practices of integrating media content into the everyday lives of individuals.

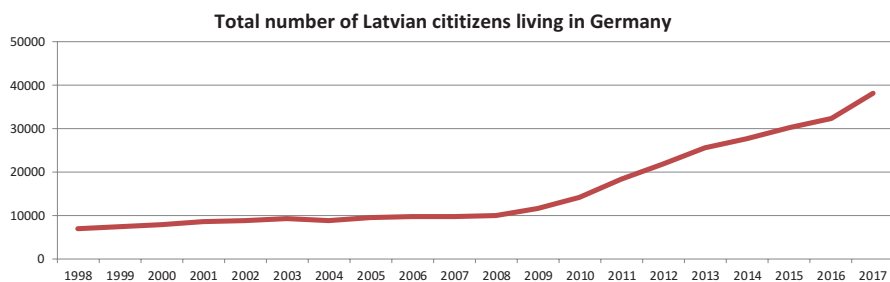


### 9.3 The Latvian Diaspora in Germany

Historically, different migrant groups have been living in Germany since the 1960s. They responded to a German invitation to work in the industries developing after World War Two. Initially invited to work for a period of several years, a large percentage of these so-called *gastarbeiter* or foreign workers decided to stay in Germany because there was demand for workers for a longer period. The initial migration of *gastarbeiter* was followed by a second phase, where their families were allowed to join them. As a consequence, large communities of Turks, Italians, Yugoslavs and others developed in Germany. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, a new migration stream from the countries of this region began. Mostly they were ethnic Germans and the so-called ‘quota refugees’ of Jewish descent from the countries of the former Soviet Union. Within a repatriation programme these people were considered as Germans and invited to return to Germany. They were expected to be ‘Germans’ and there was no real expectation of cultural differences – which, of course, there were. The migration flows described below have had the effect that in total, currently about 20% of the inhabitants in Germany have a so-called migration background (if the person or at least one parent does not possess German nationality by birth).

A number of studies have shown that Germany’s migrant communities are very heterogeneous, although they have typical migration patterns and media use as well (Dietz 2007; Hepp et al. 2012; Karakasoglu 2007). The focus of this research – the Latvian diaspora in Germany – has not been studied by social scientists until now. The Latvian diaspora in Germany is a rather small and new migrant group. Apart from migration flows from Latvia during World War Two that generated a strong community of exiled Latvians in western Germany, only a few Latvian migrants were able to leave the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Most Latvians came to Germany after the collapse of the Soviet Union and initially only in small numbers, due to the difficulty of getting legal residence status.

According to the official register of residents, there were 38,290 Latvian citizens registered as living in Germany in 2017 (see Fig. 9.1). But if we define the Latvian



**Fig. 9.1** Total number of Latvian citizens living in Germany. (Source: Statistisches Bundesamt 2018, p. 20)



diaspora a little more broadly as ‘people who identify themselves with Latvia and Latvian culture’, this figure might be much higher. Included here might be people who have German citizenship now, but still nonetheless feel a strong attachment to Latvia. We must also consider that not all Latvians living in Germany will be officially registered. According to the estimates of experts and Latvian embassy representatives in Germany interviewed for this research, there are about 60,000 Latvians living in Germany – almost a third more than the official figure.

The dynamics over the past quarter century of the numbers of Latvian migrants in Germany reflect the different migration waves. They can be described as three separate and distinct events in Latvia and Europe. The first period followed EU enlargement in 2004, when visa-free movement within the Schengen agreement states was made possible. The second wave can be identified as a consequence of the economic crisis in Latvia in 2008, when unemployment rates in Latvia were the highest in the EU. The third migration wave happened in 2011, when the German labour market was opened to workers from Latvia.

Statistically the average age of Latvian migrants in 2017 was 35 years. According to the data of the German statistical bureau the gender balance was 49% women, 51% men (Statistisches Bundesamt 2018, p. 22). The ethnic composition of the Latvian diaspora is heterogeneous and reflects the wider Latvian society. A survey conducted for the project *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* in which 1368 respondents from Germany were surveyed, showed that 64% of migrants from Latvia in Germany describe themselves ethnically as Latvian and 30% as Russians, while 6% have a different ethnicity. Out of these respondents, 89% were Latvian citizens, 6% were non-citizens or so-called ‘aliens’ with a Latvian passport but no rights to participate in elections in Latvia, and 5% had different passports while 9% had several citizenships.

Regarding their ethnic identity and social context, *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey showed that the Latvian diaspora in Germany is ethnically rather open, as 39% had a Latvian partner and 29% a Russian partner, while 32% stated that they lived with someone with a different ethnicity; for example, a German partner or someone from another migrant group.

## 9.4 Methodology

The evidence presented in this chapter is generated from the study *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* which was carried out from 2014 to 2015. A subsection in this research *Transnational Identity of the Latvian Diaspora in Germany* focused on the role of culture for the formation of cultural identity as this is seen as an important component of migrant identities. In addition, the project dealt with more general questions on transnational identities of the Latvian diaspora and the role of media in the construction of diasporic identities.

The study is based on media ethnographic research and aims to reconstruct the cultural identity and media appropriation in the subjective perspective of the

individuals, in order to arrive at a grounded understanding of identity formation processes. The concept of media ethnography is not focused on the ‘thick description’ (Geertz 1994) of individuals’ life-worlds. Media ethnography is understood here as ‘an ethnography of people who use, consume, distribute or produce media’ (Bachmann and Wittel 2006, p. 183). Accordingly, media ethnography in general does not operate with long-duration stays in one field (Lotz 2000). The current study uses the approach of ‘accumulated ethnographic miniatures’ (Bachmann and Wittel 2006), understood as the combination of a number of different short stays, observations and interviews in the field. This allows the researcher to make propositions on specific ways of media appropriation and identity development.

All the data for this study on the Latvian diaspora in Germany was collected in two German cities: Berlin and Bremen. With three million inhabitants, Berlin is the capital, and the biggest city in Germany. Bremen has about half a million people. Theoretical sampling as used in grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin 1990) was applied in recruiting and selecting participants in the study. Respondents were selected by the principle of diversity reflecting age, education and gender and duration of residence in Germany. The data collection in interviews proceeded until no new information on the research question was acquired and data saturation was achieved. The sample included 21 Latvians living in Germany, aged between 23 and 52 years old. Seven were men, and 14 were women. The longest period of time spent in Germany was 15 years while the shortest was 1 year. The educational levels included secondary school, vocational education, university bachelor and master degree, and doctoral degree. Three of the participants – Jelena, Olga and Ina – are Latvian-Russians or have Latvian and Russian parents.

Each person was interviewed about their migration experience, identity and media appropriation. They were asked to draw a network map and to keep, as far as it was possible, a 1-week open media diary (Berg and Düvel 2012), i.e. an unstructured record of all the media including content they engaged with in that 7-day period, for example, online news, social media networks, Skype conversations, emails and texts etc. The network maps are free drawings of the person’s communicative network, which was explored during the interview. These maps were used in triangulation with the interviews to capture the structures of communicative networks, while the media diaries made it possible to reconstruct the processes of media and cultural appropriation over the week. The whole data was analysed by a coding process oriented to qualitative content analysis (Mayring 2008). The data from the qualitative interviews, network maps and media diaries was coded and analysed in order to identify and describe everyday patterns of media appropriation among Latvian migrants in Germany in relation to dominating forms of cultural identity. The following sections of the paper describe findings that emerged from these ‘ethnographic miniatures’. All quotes used from the interviews are anonymised by giving the respondents pseudonyms. The main quotes presented in this chapter are from the interviews.

## 9.5 Findings

### 9.5.1 *Mediatised Culture and Identity Building Processes of the Latvian Diaspora in Germany*

According to the research question of this chapter about the role of culture and music for the Latvian diaspora in Germany, the data reveal its importance for forming a hybrid cultural identity. In the following section I will argue firstly that the appropriation of Latvian culture – and in particular, music – confirms and strengthens the self-perception of the Latvian diaspora. It corresponds with the ascribed image of Latvians as a nation that sings. Secondly, appropriation of culture delivers an important link to the country of origin and its discourses of popular culture. Thirdly, Latvian music and culture is an important aspect for the forming and cohesion of the local diaspora community.

### 9.5.2 *Transnational Identity and Culture*

The individual aspects of the cultural identity of Latvians living in Germany can be described by the analysis of their identification patterns and their integration in the subjective self-image. All the interviewed respondents – including Russian speakers as well – defined themselves as Latvians or as someone who belongs to Latvian territory. ‘Latvian-ness’ is understood here less as ethnic belonging but rather as belonging to the Latvian state and Latvian culture. This is proved through the example of those individuals who do not have Latvian citizenship but nevertheless define themselves as Latvians. For example, 47-year-old Aivita, a Latvian, has lived in Germany since 1991 and has only German citizenship:

I see myself as a Latvian, there is no doubt about it. If you look at my family history, you see that the nationality is unimportant for me. What importance does it have? I am born in Latvia, I grew up in Latvia.

The quote reflects how respondents understand the concept of belonging to the territory of Latvia. Another respondent, 23-year-old Evija, said that even if she gained German citizenship she would still have a strong identification with Latvia and Latvian culture:

I would not say that at the moment I wish to gain German citizenship. There is a possibility that someday I will be a German citizen. But I will stay Latvian forever. I would not be German. Maybe it would be written in my passport then. But this does not change your identity and that’s where you come from.

These examples show a hybridity of identity, where different national cultural references become important. Many of the Latvians interviewed see themselves as well-integrated in German society and feel a strong commitment to German society. Often spontaneous cultural situations or music appropriation brings ‘Latvian-ness’

to the front of this hybrid identity. These different identity aspects are not exclusive and are well combined in everyday life. In the following interview extract 38-year-old Ina describes it vividly:

Music is a connection with my home country. You are living here, running and working. But when you suddenly hear Latvian folk music on your Walkman, you return to a lost normality. It is related to my inner state. It is important to me. I am what I am. In fact, I am integrated very well here – perfectly, actually. Often, I forget that I am not German. I am not feeling German, but I am also not feeling a stranger, or somebody from outside, or a different individual. But my nature is different. When I listen to my favourite [Latvian] rock opera '*Lāčplēsis*', I go crazy. This music activates such sounds and veins in me that are hidden under rational layers all the time. And then your other identity comes out that is very deep inside you.

The self-perception of Latvians is articulated as people for whom music is important. Evija underlines this with the following sentence: 'Yes, we are a nation that sings.' This co-articulates with the national image the state is developing. Every 5 years a Latvian Song and Dance Festival is organised in which amateur choirs from Latvia and Latvian choirs from all over the world participate, singing mostly Latvian folksongs and classical choir songs. Ina, a highly qualified worker in her late 30s, describes a typical biographical pattern in this context that is forming the collective discourse about the Latvian nation:

This is how I grew up. I think all Latvians grew up like this. Starting from the first grade you sing in a choir, dance in a folk-dance group, at your Grandma's during your childhood [you sing]. My Latvian Grandma in Skrīveri always sang. She sang folksongs, she recited folksongs, read books to me. So music is in your life from an early age.

Some Latvians interviewed, like Arvis and Uldis, participated in the 2013 Song Festival and continued to sing in local Latvian choirs in Germany. Anita sings in the Latvian choir in Berlin because she 'likes to sing' and she loves Latvian music. Other reported watching clips from the festival on the internet again and again, extending the strong emotions of common culture and identity experienced at the festival. The importance of Latvian music for cultural identity describes the efforts of the diaspora to teach the second generation – their children – traditional Latvian music and culture. Anita and Uldis sent their children to Latvian Sunday school in Berlin. Anita explains her reasons as follows: 'I wanted my daughter to learn Latvian songs – folksongs.' Uldis sings Latvian lullabies to his son and reads Latvian fairy tales. Evita says her children sing popular Latvian songs when they are driving in the car.

If asked about their musical preferences most of the Latvians interviewed in Germany named Latvian pop and folk music as their favourite – besides European and American pop music. Many of them have Latvian music in their record collections; others listen to Latvian music via the internet. Uldis, for example, has listened to Latvian music online 'for several years'. Most of the respondents prefer music that was popular when they still lived in Latvia and can be described as 'pop and rock classics' or as Maiga calls it, 'the good old songs'.

Sometimes music provokes feelings of nostalgia and homesickness: at other times, Latvian music is an important component in celebrations at festivities.

All interviewees reported feeling nostalgic from time to time. Those who left Latvia recently felt homesick more often. But all Latvians interviewed in this study struggle with this feeling from time to time. Latvian music is used in such situations for solace. As Inese puts it: 'When I miss Latvia, I turn on Latvian music, listen to it and cry a little.' Olga listens to recordings of Latvian choir music. This music gives her a powerful link to her home country. Evija uses Latvian music as a motivator when she is tired and sad:

I listen online to the [choir] song *Song of the Soul*. It is so emotional. Or I watch some songs from the Song Festival, how the big choir sings the beginning of the song *Light Castle*. Then you sit there and feel how the Latvian-ness is filling you up. You can move on; you have charged the energy from your home country.

Strong emotional attachment to Latvian culture and the Latvian nation strengthens self-perceptions as 'a Latvian'. Many respondents report that their feelings of national identity and belonging got stronger when they left their home country. Abroad they feel they are 'more Latvian' than they did when living in Latvia before migrating. These feelings get stronger partly because of cultural practices in everyday life. One 43-year-old woman, Vaira, said she learned to value Latvian folklore and culture after she left Latvia to live in Germany:

I wanted more traditions, more folklore here. When I was still in Latvia, I was not so much into it. Actually, I found a passion for it here. Many things changed for me here, how I now see them. What Latvia is, how important Latvia is for me: I realised that from a distance. (...) For example the Latvian cultural heritage: the Dainas [folksongs], the poets, the writers are unique in Latvia. I have learned to appreciate Latvia more; all that is associated with Latvia. I have become a bigger Latvian patriot here than if I would be if I still lived in Latvia.

Similarly, Evita, 30 at the time of the study, when talking about the celebration of Latvian festivities in Germany remarked: 'I think that the traditions [among Latvians] are pursued more here and are appreciated more than in Latvia.' The celebration of Latvian festivities within the group maintains the collective aspects of a national identity, as will be shown later.

Some respondents show aspects of hybrid identity; that is, different references of a certain identity. They feel a strong connection to such transnational narratives as 'the European idea' and 'German society'. The example of Evija, a 23-year-old bachelor student underlines that. She sees European culture and values as part of her identity and dissociates herself from the older generation in Latvia, for whom – she thinks – the values of the Soviet time are still important:

First of all, I feel myself as a Latvian. A Latvian who lives in Germany, who is maybe in some sense Germanised. Basically, I feel myself as a European. (...) I understand the European world much better. European culture, language and traditions. Rather than the other side, Soviet Union, Russia; I think all that that is closer to my parents. (...) Unfortunately in Latvia there are people who love the Soviet culture. Even if it sounds weird, I belong to Europe.

Evija's quote underlines the everyday negotiation processes of the different cultural discourses on which that hybrid identity relies. She feels both Latvian and European at the same time and has to combine these two orientations under one concept of cultural identity. However, a European identity is typical only for a few respondents, and this identification is less strong than the identification with Latvia. Here we can see the importance of context in the identity-building processes. Different identity aspects become important depending on the particular context and situation. Different identity references do not exclude each other, but rather are reciprocal. All respondents rely on 'Latvian-ness' with the most important identity reference being a subjective defined Latvian culture. But many speak about the relevance of the German context and European values, as the example of Evija shows. For example, Rudolfs, a 40-year-old who describes himself as being strongly assimilated into German society, says: 'Some [Latvian] national pride is left here. It is not wholly Germanised.' Similarly, Ina, 38, who grew up in a bilingual family, defines herself as Latvian, despite there being Russian culture in her family in Latvia and her feeling that the German aspects of her life are important as well:

Int.: When someone asks, how do you define yourself, who you are?

Resp.: Latvian of course. I am not Russian. I have heard about Russia, I have been there, but I don't feel like... Ok, Russian culture is important for me, I understand it. But German culture is important for me too and I understand it. But I do not feel [that] ... There is no such question.

Int.: Others say they have a double identification.

Resp.: No, I don't have double identification. I am somehow totally clear about it. I don't know, maybe it is because of the Latvian folklore, but for me Latvian bushes are more like home than this flat [in Germany]. I don't know... Latvia is totally different. This goes so far, that when I arrive in Latvia, when I get off the bus, the air, the land, the trees are the same as here, but it feels different. Somehow all these different layers that I have here fall away leaving only one layer that is wild but authentic.

Ina's words describe the plurality of migrant identities and suggest that different identifications – such as in her case, Latvian, Russian and German – are not conflicting and can be lived mostly in a state of harmonic hybridity.

### ***9.5.3 Connection to Latvia and Different Cultural Discourses***

Most of the Latvian migrants interviewed in this study mentioned the need to be connected to pop-cultural discourses in Latvia and other countries. Those socialised in the former Soviet Union report strong links to Soviet cultural heritage as well. This shows the importance of another identity layer – the Soviet popular cultural layer for Latvian migrants over the age of 35.

The connection to different cultural discourses is integrated in everyday media use, with a regular appropriation of different Latvian news websites and social network sites. These discourses are important frames of references of migrant identities; of the understanding about Latvia, 'Latvian-ness' and the Latvian diaspora. This is the case for Marija, a 49-year-old unskilled worker, who says: 'Latvian

culture has been important for me all the time.’ To fulfil her cultural interests, she watches Latvian movies which she finds mostly on YouTube:

Lately I have been watching the movie *Likteņdzirnas* [The Mills of Fate, 1997] several times. I love this Latvian movie very much. I love it so much that I can watch it very often. (...) On YouTube you can see many Latvian movies. I watch mostly different popular movies. Like *Ezera sonāte* [Lake Sonata, 1976] for example.

The film Marija mentioned first, *The Mills of Fate*, was made in the late 1990s and can be seen as a movie representing the national mood of the late twentieth century in Latvian society, where optimism after the restoration of independence is confronted with the economic difficulties of a post-Soviet state. It corresponds with the rather negative attitude of Marija towards the Latvian state: she is ‘disappointed’ with the economic situation in Latvia. The second film, *Lake Sonata*, was made in the mid-1970s. This drama pictures a complex intertwining of history with the fate of several members of a single family, unfolding as a heart-breaking love story and showing the way of life in rural Latvia in Soviet times. The preference for this kind of film corresponds to Marija’s longing – as she mentioned in the interview – for the ‘good old times’ of the Soviet Union.

Like Rudolfs, Berlin choir singer Anita describes a regular appropriation of the ‘golden classics’ of Latvian popular film culture. Anita lists many Latvian cinema and animation films produced during Soviet times which are very popular among Latvian viewers. She says: ‘You can watch them all online. Before that we bought DVDs and watched them on weekends and holidays.’

For Latvian migrants over the age of 35, culture from the Soviet era is an inseparable component of Latvian culture and plays an important role in the self-perception of Latvians of a certain age. The regular appropriation of these Soviet-time cultural artefacts defines the national cultural identity of Latvian migrants in Germany.

Watching films made in independent Latvia and also Soviet Latvia is part of the way Anita is teaching Latvian culture and language to her daughter as she grows up in Germany. Ina, for example, says that contemporary Latvian films help her to stay connected with the Latvian language; something she has problems with in her environment, which is mostly German-dominated. Other respondents report similar efforts to teach their children Latvian culture and language. For example, Ingrida, a 41-year-old mother of two, bought her daughter books of Latvian folk song music so she can play these songs on the flute.

Furthermore, a deep interest in cultural news is inter-related with the need to be able to participate in daily conversations with family and friends when connected via media or visiting the home country. For example, Evija tried to catch up on the popular music scene in Latvia as she wanted to be a part of a discourse, not only with her friends but in the wider society as well:

Resp.: I watched the Eurovision Song Contest a little. I wanted to be up to date. Because when I am at home [in Latvia] people are talking about it. My friends are talking about it, but I have no clue about it. Then I watched some videos they posted.

Int.: Which song was the last one you listened to?

Resp.: This new song from the singer Dons called ‘*Last Letter*’. This is a song all Latvia was talking about. I thought: ‘What is that song?’ It turned out it had been very popular in Latvia for some time already. I got to know it a little late. But better late than never.



Other respondents use the resources of the Latvian social networking site draugiem.lv, where new songs can be streamed. Rita and Maria sometimes watch the music talent show *O Kartes akadēmija* [a TV format similar to *American Idol*] as they want to be informed about emerging pop stars in Latvia. Sabine and Evita watch popular Latvian soap operas on the internet; the same ones they watched before their emigration. Inese regularly watches the internet show *Suņu būda*, in which popular people from Latvia are interviewed, similar to the TV show *Hard Talk*. These are just a few examples of how Latvian popular culture is embedded in global TV culture. Most respondents link this culture to the current Latvian culture and not the current global culture. This shows some possible multi-layering and hybridity of the cultural identity of Latvian migrants in Germany.

The Eurovision Song Contest, a contest in which participants from different European countries are voted by a TV audience as the best music performer in Europe, activates the sense of national belonging to Latvia. It has a re-connecting function. Sabine says, for example, that she started to follow the event only after she left Latvia. She links it with her patriotic feelings and with the interest on pop-cultural news from Latvia. Her view corresponds with other respondents – that even if they could not attend such events like the Song and Dance Festival or the Eurovision Song Contest, they would follow them online and were thrilled about the achievement of Latvian artists. Similarly, Evita connects popular cultural events with patriotic feelings, which corresponds with views expressed by other respondents. They are proud of the achievement of Latvian artists and athletes in Latvia and abroad. Discussing an ice hockey match between Latvia and Canada at the Winter Olympics in Sochi in 2014 Sabine said: ‘Of course I was proud to hear about Latvia [on German media]!’ This emphasises the role of the media in giving access to different cultural events. Previous papers (see Sūna 2017), have shown that migrants from Latvia in Germany use four different media spaces – media from Latvia, Germany and Russia, as well as transnational diasporic media. This plurality of information spaces corresponds with the different layers of migrant cultural identities.

Parallel to the mediated connection to Latvian cultural discourses, some interviewees try to follow cultural news intensively when they are in Latvia, and participate as much as possible in cultural events. This quote from Ina describes this well:

I was at the [outdoor music] *Positivus* festival in the summer. I feel the need and necessity to experience things that are going on in Latvia. It is not so that I go to home to sit down with my mother and drink coffee and then go back. I want to *gad* [breathe in] through Latvia; I want to go to the *Positivus* festival, to participate in all that happens.

The biggest international pop-music festival in Latvia, *Positivus* is popular among the Latvian middle class, which is already oriented to Western culture and can be described as rather cosmopolitan. Ina’s views, quoted above, describe a strong orientation to Western cultural discourses that can be re-connected to the discourses dominant in the German middle class.

For Evita, a 30-year-old housewife, it is important that she and her children go to Latvia at least three times a year and get maximum insight into the current cultural life when they are there. This corresponds with her desire to belong to Latvian society still. She has the feeling that her active engagement with cultural life during her



visits to Latvia satisfies this desire. This goes hand in hand with her efforts to maintain a Latvian identity and to pass it on to her two children. She says:

Before we go to Latvia, I search for the cultural programme there and consider what we can do together with the children during our visit. When we are there I have a plan: how we can see everything in these two weeks and show our children what's important to us.

Evita's comments show the mediated preparation work she does on cultural participation in Latvia and her role in providing Latvian culture to her children.

Others, such as Ingrida, try to get overall information on the cultural news and on new cultural products while they are in Latvia:

When I am in Latvia, I have some things I always do: I go to a record store, a book store, and a knitting store. These are things that I have to do. (...) In book stores I look at which new books are released, Latvian mostly. (...) I ordered a new CD recently from the Latvian Song and Dance Festival.

The cultural products which are important for the development of cultural identity vary, from music CDs to Latvian food and clothes. It shows how important a variety of information about everyday practices of cultural appropriation can be for the analysis of cultural identity.

As well as gathering information about cultural activities in Latvia, most Latvian migrants interviewed in Germany see it as important to be informed about other issues too, such as politics and local celebrity life. This is integrated in their everyday media appropriation practices. For example, they read news websites from Latvia almost every day. Vaira, who is originally from Liepāja, a cultural centre in Western Latvia with strong musical traditions, says she seeks out news about the city where she spent her childhood:

I do still read these [Latvian] internet pages. I know what is going on there. I talk to my mother and my sisters. I think it is important for me to know what is going on there. Because if I am a Latvian citizen and I go to the elections then I have to know what they are doing in Latvia. At least via media. I look them up [these websites] every day. These are the usual websites – Apollo, TVnet, Kas jauns? Liepājnieki. Because Liepāja is important for me.

This quote shows Vaira's strong attachment to Latvia and to the particular region she comes from. She also reveals the typical ways migrants source their information about Latvia. On the one hand she reads news websites, while on the other hand she gathers information from mediated interpersonal communication such as Voice-Over-IP communication or communication on social networking sites. This practice of interpersonal communication is typical mostly for respondents who read less Latvian media. It is evident from the interview material that their opinions about Latvia often reflect the rather one-sided opinion of their social network. For example, Anita has quite negative opinions about the political and economic situation in Latvia which, she explains in her interview, her family shares with her.

All in all, the need of migrants as described above to connect to the different discourses from Latvia corresponds with the need to negotiate the meanings and values of a 'typical Latvian'. This negotiation is an active process which results in the cultural narratives of the Latvian diaspora about the imagined Latvian nation (Anderson 1990).

### ***9.5.4 Integration Within the Local Diaspora Community: Strengthening the Belonging***

Regarding collective aspects of cultural identity, the data show a relatively strong identification among Latvian migrants with the transnational Latvian diaspora community and the diaspora community in Germany. According to the definition, a diaspora gets stronger if there is a common narrative and communicative practices that spread it. The need for communication with other Latvians and the need to connect with those nearby confirm that. It is important for Latvian migrants in Germany to celebrate different Latvian festivities like Independence Day on November 18th or the Summer Solstice and Midsummer festivities. The planning and organising of these events is fulfilled via digital media through different but related groups on social media platforms. These common celebrations foster a sense of belonging to the Latvian nation and the common frames of references that are seen as essential for Latvians all over the world. The following quote from the interview with Evija describes this longing to meet other Latvians and confirm her belonging to the Latvian nation:

One Latvian spreads the information about Latvian meetings to others. I was very interested in meeting other Latvians. I thought: 'Somehow I have to celebrate the 18th of November. Somehow, I should show who I am, where I come from.' It was important for me. As well as to find out who these other Latvians are who are living here in Germany.

For Evija, a 23-year-old student, it is important to confirm her patriotic feelings through other members of the Latvian migrant community. Thus, national identity is formed via collective recognition of the peer group and against the background of the German society.

It is typical of new migrants that they are searching for other migrants from their country of origin who live nearby, especially if they have difficulties with the local language. Other members of the diaspora have a supportive function, so new migrants can find their place in their new country of residence. Thus, for the initial period of migration inner-diasporic cohesion is strong, but gets weaker with the integration of migrants into the job market. Some of the Latvians interviewed in Germany accessed the local Latvian community via a Latvian choir, for example. Arvis, 38, who moved to Germany 4 years ago, says:

I wanted to meet our own people. (...) I wanted to meet with Latvians. Especially at the beginning, when you do not know anybody here, then [the choir] is an opportunity to meet other Latvians. But the choir as such is a good thing as I like singing.

In a similar story, Aigars, a 52-year-old unskilled worker talks about seeking contacts in the local diaspora community and finding information about the Latvian choir on the internet. The choir is an important part of the local Latvian community: it unites Latvians with an interest in their culture and delivers a musical accompaniment for Latvian festivities like Midsummer, Christmas, Easter and other celebrations. Here we see how governmental efforts to support the choir culture abroad correspond with the function of community-strengthening in the Latvian diaspora.

This is true beyond cultural activities, as choir events foster communication among migrants who do not sing by themselves but do attend events like this.

The example of two friends, Ina and Arturs from Bremen, shows that an institutional organisation is not always needed for common cultural practices. Spontaneous groups can emerge based on the common interests and shared values of Latvian traditional and popular culture. Ina and Arturs both sing with their Latvian friends during private gatherings at home on regular basis. Ina describes it in the following way: 'We have a small Latvian group. We come together with guitars and sing. We sing different folksongs. Everybody brings some songs with them. Well, sometimes we sing some Muse or Placebo songs too. Ina's comments show how Latvian music can be a common part of everyday life – i.e. Latvian songs are sung not only at festivities or similar occasions, but are a natural everyday companion. And here again Ina notes that her German friends and acquaintances describe the Latvian community as people who sing Latvian and other songs at parties and confirm their self-perception of Latvians as people who sing, and for whom national culture is an important part of their identification. Also, Ina includes Western mainstream popular music in her musical preferences. This shows again the hybridity of migrant identity, and its ability to unite different national, transnational and global cultural references in cultural identity.

Stories about collective singing or cultural appropriation highlight the aspect of mutual emotional support within the diaspora. This helps migrants develop a sense of belonging to the place of residence. Evija stresses that the diaspora community delivers support in the form of common understanding and cultural proximity that is typical within a nation. As mentioned earlier, most of the respondents feel nostalgia and experience situations where they are not fully understood by German society. Evija describes this cultural proximity via common cultural appropriation practices:

I am always so happy to meet her [her friend, another Latvian girl]. Because it is like she knows the culture where you come from. You can start a song and she can finish it. Or she understands specific jokes that only Latvians understand. That is, in essence, a person who understands you and the culture you come from.

Running alongside local diaspora networks and networking, some of the Latvians interviewed showed close connections with the transnational Latvian diaspora in Europe. This is maintained mostly via mediated communication, although on this level personal communication is more important than cultural aspects. An exception here is Latvians who are members of institutionalised cultural organisations like choirs or folk-dance groups. They participate in different regional and European cultural events and connect to members of the Latvian diaspora in other countries. For example, Arvis participated in a European choir rehearsal in Brussels and performed at a concert for Independence Day in Hamburg. Again, cultural activities performed transnationally strengthen the collective identity of Latvian migrants.

All in all, culture can be seen as a catalyst for the development of the local diasporic community. Participation in the activities of the diaspora in typical traditional and popular cultural activities fosters connections with the transnational diaspora and generates a sense of transnational belonging to the imagined Latvian nation.

## 9.6 Conclusions

The aim of this paper was to explore how cultural and media appropriation impact on the identity formation of recent Latvian-origin migrants in Germany. Data analysis in this chapter shows that the local and mediated appropriation of culture shapes the individual and collective self-perception of Latvians living abroad. Latvian culture is seen as a representation of collective narratives of imagined common frames of references of the Latvian nation. The results showed a plurality of these references as they consist of influences from the period of Soviet Latvia and also Western popular culture. This multi-layeredness reflects in the hybridity of the cultural identities of Latvian migrants that are mostly taken for granted and not seen as problematic.

Many social scientists like Beck (1997) and Welsch (1999) have made the point that music and culture increasingly circulate beyond the confines of the nation-state, and that links between culture and nation are now weakened. According to this view, musical cultures existing within a nation state are rarely exclusively national, as – due to the mediatisation processes – they are shaped by transnational cultural flows. Despite this Hesmondhalgh (2013, pp. 153–157) stresses that musical nationalism is still an important issue in Europe – and that could be shown in this paper as well.

The great importance of ethnic culture and music for migrants can be explained with the concept of ‘small nationalisms’ (Hall 1995; Hepp 2004; Lull 1995) which is typical of diasporas. Small nationalisms can be described as efforts to re-territorialise the culture of the origin nation abroad. The appropriation of culture, discussed in this paper, confirms these efforts. The efforts of the Latvian diaspora in Germany in still trying to maintain a common Latvian culture is an example of small nationalism. With the help of ethnic music and culture they identify with a collective cultural narrative of the imagined nation. Through these cultural references distinction processes become active as these deliver a common understanding of belonging, distinction and otherness. Music confirms the reported self-perception of a national identity that is then negotiated with others in communication processes.

On one hand, as this paper has shown through the examples of the cultural activity of members of the Latvian diaspora in Germany, culture and popular music is associated with abstract national values. Georgiou (2012) describes it as the development of cultural proximity via the appropriation of culture from the country of origin.

On the other hand, music – especially Western mainstream popular music – can mediate cross-culturally between different nations and nation states. Musical experiences help to make connections with others, both within and outside the diaspora. However, whether musical experiences might breed commonality across differences cannot be addressed with one simple answer.

Therefore, the advent of the internet and online communities has enabled the building and strengthening of émigré Latvian communities linked to friends, family and culture back in their country of origin, mobilising especially at times of national celebration or festivities, such as Independence Day, New Year or name days. It is the hybridity of identity that makes this cultural nationalism possible. The transnational Latvian identity can exist parallel to the well-integrated migrant identity. They do not exclude each other: Alongside their interest in Latvian culture, all respondents showed at least a little interest in the country they were living in as well as other Western European cultural fields. All in all, this chapter revealed the hybridity of Latvian migrant identities and it could not confirm fears in German public discourse about alienation within migrant communities. It showed that belonging to the imagined Latvian nation is an important part of migrant cultural identity but does not result in isolation in the county of residence: rather, it is combined in a lived hybridity. It can be assumed that the dynamics of cultural and media identity described can also be observed among Latvian migrants in other countries.

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# Chapter 10

## Latvian Emigrants in the United States: Different Waves, Different Identities?



Andris Saulītis and Inta Mieriņa

### 10.1 Introduction

The United States has one of the most influential and visible Latvian diaspora organisations. The secretariat of the World Federation of Free Latvians, an umbrella organisation for the Latvian diaspora worldwide established in 1955, is located 25 miles from the Capitol in Washington DC. Additionally, there are several niche organisations, such as the Latvian National Opera Guild in the United States, which was founded after Latvia regained independence in 1991. Hence, the Latvian diaspora in the United States seems vibrant and well-organised. However, several studies have shown that these diaspora organisations do not involve a large number those Latvian emigrants who have arrived in the United States after 1991 (hereinafter, the ‘new’ Latvian emigrants). As a result, scholarship on the Latvian diaspora in the United States considers that there is more than one Latvian diaspora community – with different traditions, understanding of ‘Latvianness’ and everyday practices (Garoza 2011; Hinkle 2006).

The focus in the studies on Latvian migrants in the United States has been on identity as expressed and cultivated by the formal institutions, such as Latvian supplementary schools (Garoza 2011) or World War II refugees (Hinkle 2006) and less attention has been given on the daily practices and everyday life of the ‘new’ Latvian emigrants. What are the reasons for inability to integrate the newcomers from Latvia into the existing and politically and culturally active Latvian diaspora community in the United States? More generally, how do these ‘new’ Latvian emigrants from the most recent emigration wave interact with those who arrived shortly after the World War II and their descendants? These questions are the focus of this chapter, examining these issues based on two sources of information.

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The chapter begins with a theoretical discussion on the concepts used in the chapter, such as diaspora, community, transnationalism and nomadism. Then information on methodology and data description is provided. Afterwards, we discuss several aspects of the 'new' Latvian emigrants' identity, namely the reasons for emigration, social memory, use of communication technologies, attitudes towards Latvian diaspora organisations, sense of belonging and integration in the United States. The chapter ends with several concluding remarks.

## 10.2 Community, Identity and Globalisation

The theoretical framework for analysing the identity of the 'new' Latvian emigrants in the United States is based on the work of Benedict Anderson (2006) and his notion of 'imagined community'. He discusses identity together with the emergence of nationalism and believes that the latter, as well nationality and 'nation-ness', are 'cultural artefacts of a particular kind' and form the basis for the 'imagined community' (Anderson 2006, p. 4). Anderson notes that these communities are closed and sovereign: closed because there are members and non-members; sovereign because they are based on idea of the existing or imagined nation state. The ways individuals identify with a particular imagined community are several and diverse. For this reason, Anderson (2006) argues that 'communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined' (p. 6). Therefore, in the discussion of communities it is important to explore how and to what extent individuals identify themselves culturally and socially with a particular imagined community.

Anderson's notion of imagined community is somewhat limited because it looks at the community from the perspective of nationalism. It overlooks the possible multiple ways in which individuals can associate themselves with a particular community. Moreover, it diminishes the possibility of discovering the subgroups and/or subcultures, which exist parallel to each other in the twenty-first century because of the process of globalisation.

Our understanding of globalisation is close to that of the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas, who describes it as a phenomena which helps to characterise 'a process, not an end-state' (Habermas 2001, p. 65). This process is based on the increased usage of technologies and the high intensity of 'the circulatory process between humanity, technology and nature' (Habermas 2001, p. 66). In the words of Habermas, the pressure of globalisation challenges the basis of the nation state when the emergence of multiculturalism is inevitable. At the same time, there is a strong desire for community, but these emergent communities are formed on a smaller scale than the state in which 'the tendency of supposedly homogenous subcultures to seal themselves off from one another may be due in part to attempts to re-appropriate real communities, or to invent imaginary ones' (Habermas 2001, p. 76). In other words, the imagined community is no longer a replica of the nation state, as the notion of 'state' has lost its integral meaning. Hence it is reasonable to

discuss the presence of several imagined communities which exist side by side and are not mutually exclusive. Some of these imagined communities can be associated with the idea of a nation state, but it is not a crucially defining factor of the imagined community, as the reference to the nation state is not obligatory.

Anderson has noticed the emergence of migration and communication in his writings. In fact, these processes are the departure point for his argument of 'long-distance nationalism' when he discusses identity among the emigrants (see Anderson 1992). He notes that because of the regular communication between emigrants and relatives in the homeland, as well as because of the availability of media products 'the mediated imagery of 'home' is always with them [the emigrants]' (Anderson 1992, p. 8). However, the development of long-distance nationalism has taken different trajectories in Europe and the United States. While in Europe there is a lack of political integration ('Will it really be possible to imagine oneself politically as a 'European,' in the way that it was for long possible to imagine oneself as an 'American'?' asks Anderson (1992, p. 11), in the United States long-distance nationalism has created several subcultures, which are based on associative ties with the country of origin, diminishing the ones with the country of residence, namely the United States. For this reason, Anderson concludes the following: 'The national institutions and national identity forged during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries no longer have their old commanding power. Hence the emphasis has been shifting from say, *Irish-American* to *Irish-American*' (Anderson 1992, p. 10). Thus, for Anderson, because of long-distance nationalism, ethnic identities have become much stronger, while political ones have lost their influence.

Nevertheless, long-distance nationalism is only one way in which individuals can associate themselves with the imagined community. Nina Glick-Schiller (2004) emphasises that long-distance nationalism differs from other ways of identification with the imagined community because of its political dimension. 'Long-distance nationalists are engaged in some form of political project oriented specifically toward the territory they designate as the homeland,' notes Glick-Schiller, distinguishing the term from the notion of diaspora, which is 'used for a range of experiences of identification with a dispersed population.' (Glick Schiller 2004, p. 571). The diaspora community can organise its activities with or without the reference to the nation state and its identity can be based mainly on a collective memory.

To sum up, it has to be noted that the formation of identity is influenced by various factors, including – but not limited to – the developments in communications and technologies. Additionally, it is not crucial for the community to have political aims, but the identification could be based solely on cultural or social grounds. Nevertheless, it is crucial to have a common understanding of the social history and memory.

On the other hand, because of globalisation, the boundaries of identity have expanded. Partly, this has been a reason why many scholars look at migration processes through the notion of transnationalism, which explains why migrants could have more than one identification, for example with both the place of origin and place of residence. As sociologist Thomas Faist (2010) notes, transnationalism studies focus on mobility and networks. The members of the transnational community

could be in both the country of origin and the country of the host. For this reason, 'transnational community' is not a synonym for 'diaspora community'. Distinguishing the two, Faist notes that 'diaspora and transnationalism are crucial elements for questioning and redefining essential terms of the social sciences, for example, 'community', 'social space' and 'boundaries' (Faist 2010, p. 33).

Although diaspora and transnationalism are terms of a similar nature, Michel Bruneau (2010) distinguishes diaspora from transnational communities. He considers four types of diaspora communities: religious, enterprise, political and a combination of race and culture (Bruneau 2010, pp. 40–42). In comparison to diaspora communities, the transnational ones are unstable and relative. 'There is no strong desire to return, because transmigrants never actually leave their place of origin, in which they retain family and community ties that are greatly simplified thanks to the growth, regularity and safety of communications,' notes Bruneau (2010, p. 44). In what follows, we are not trying to categorise the existing community or communities of Latvians in the United States under the term either of diaspora or transnationalism. The study of the 'new' Latvian emigrants in the United States in this chapter takes a critical approach towards both concepts in order to reconsider the notion of community. As such, we will look at mobility, social networks and social memory as crucial aspects for an individual's willingness to identify with a particular imagined community. We do believe that there exist a diasporic community of Latvians in the United States, but its existence highlights the difference between different waves of migrants from Latvia. To some extent, these differences could be founded in the differences of the place of birth. As Roger Waldinger (2012) points out, there are different identities among the immigrant offspring and the recently arrived ones in the United States. The case is evident among Mexicans, Chinese and other nationalities in the United States (Waldinger 2012, p. 96). For Waldinger, the recent migrants should hold stronger transnational ties with the homeland than the offsprings. However, as previous studies have shown, the case of Latvians is rather the opposite one. While those, who arrived in the United States shortly after the World War II, engage with the diaspora organizations, these diaspora institutions lack to attract the newcomers (Garozza 2011).

Transnationalism, globalization and long-distance nationalism, taken together, are the concepts, which we find helpful to expand the study of migration and belongingness outside the institutionalism and nation-state. We are more interested in everyday practices, which are as important as institutions in shaping the patterns of migration.

### 10.3 Methodology

The findings of this chapter are based on both qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative data was gathered during the period from July to September 2014 when 15 interviews were conducted with Latvian emigrants. These interviews took place

in three cities – New York, Chicago and Washington DC. Some of the interviews were held in Riga, during the emigrants' visits to relatives and friends in Latvia.

The youngest respondent was 26 years old at the time of the interview and the eldest was 60 years old (the median of ages is 31 years). The gender balance in the sample was almost even, as eight of the respondents were women and seven were men. The ethnic background of the respondents was relatively diverse. Although the majority were Latvians, three of them were members of ethnic minorities in Latvia – Russian, Ukrainian, and Jewish, of which one was not born in Latvia, but Ukraine. All other respondents came from Latvia. The majority, ten participants, were from the capital city Riga; the others were from other major cities and rural areas. The time spent abroad differed too, from 2 to 19 years, with the median of 8 years. The names of all the respondents have been changed to ensure their anonymity.

In parallel with the interviews with the 'new' Latvian emigrants, the study looked at the data from the survey of Latvians abroad carried out in the framework of the study *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia: National Identity, Transnational Relations, and Diaspora Politics*. The survey was carried out online from August 4th, 2014 to October 30th, 2014. It consisted of 14,068 emigrants from 118 countries. (For details on survey methodology see Mieriņa in this volume). The sample in this chapter excludes emigrants who departed from Latvia prior to 1991. Therefore, it focuses exclusively on the 'new' Latvian emigrants.

The survey was used to explore more broadly the findings from the qualitative interviews. It was based on logistic regressions in which survey weights with imputations were used to generalise the results on all Latvian emigrants, including those who did not have a Latvian passport. The survey allowed the examination of whether respondents in the United States are distinct from Latvians in other countries of residence. For this reason, the data from the survey used in this article includes those countries which have the largest Latvian migrant communities: the United States (~96,000), the United Kingdom (~100,000), Canada, Australia and New Zealand (>51,000), Ireland (~25,000–30,000), Germany (~30,000) and Nordic countries, i.e., Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden (>41,000) (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2014).

We were interested in two variables from the survey. First, the reason for emigration, which was the dependent variable for the multinomial logistic regression with standard robust errors. Each respondent could choose one of four possible answers: (1) work, (2) study, (3) To join a family or to start a family and (4) other. The main independent variable is the respondent's country of residence. We discuss the results of the regression together with the qualitative data analysis in the Sect. 10.4.1.

The second regression model used in this chapter explores the number of respondent's close friends from Latvia in the country of residence. The former (number of friends) is the dependent variable, the latter (country of residence) is the main independent variable. As the dependent variable in this regression model is continuous, we use ordered logistic model with robust standard errors. The results are used in the Sect. 10.4.4. in which we discuss the social networks of Latvians in the United States. While all the models are available in appendixes 2–3, in the text we report marginal effects with all control variables included, such as gender, family size, occupation and wealth (see Appendix Table 10.1).

The use of both qualitative and quantitative methods is complimentary in this chapter. Qualitative data allows us to explore how Latvians have integrated in the United States and how well are their relationships with diaspora organizations. Quantitative data gives the opportunity to contextualize the findings from the interviews, as well as to examine the statements by respondents whether they hold true on a larger population. We believe that this approach gives us the most accurate picture of Latvian migrant community in the United States, as well as provide comparative look at Latvian emigrants in other countries of residence.

## 10.4 Findings

### 10.4.1 *Reasons for Departure and Its Meaning for Emigrants*

The scholarship on the recent Latvian migrants in the United States considers them as a common social group with a particular identity, specific interests and lifestyle. This identity is based on a common understanding of Latvian traditions, use of language and specific customs (Garoza 2011; Hinkle 2006). However, it is worth reflecting on whether it is possible to consider the group of Latvian migrants who arrived in the United States after 1991 as having an ‘identity’ – or if it is a category constructed in the minds of the scholars and not one that actually exists in the real world.

The way the respondents talk about their reasons for leaving is one of the arguments against a notion of community with regard to the ‘new’ Latvian emigrants. For some, the reason for leaving was a coincidence; others were willing to travel abroad or had a good work opportunity. Respondents often reveal that the absence of one unifying reason for emigration among the new emigrants is the basis of a lack of common identity. Those who travelled to the United States shortly after World War II had little choice, while for the new emigrants it was more or less a personal preference.

Resp: I had an aunt here [in the United States], who arrived in the United States after the war, and she had eight kids. For this reason, she travelled to Latvia all the time in order to visit them during the summer, and told me all the good things about the United States.

By the age of 16 I already had a belief that I would not stay in Latvia.

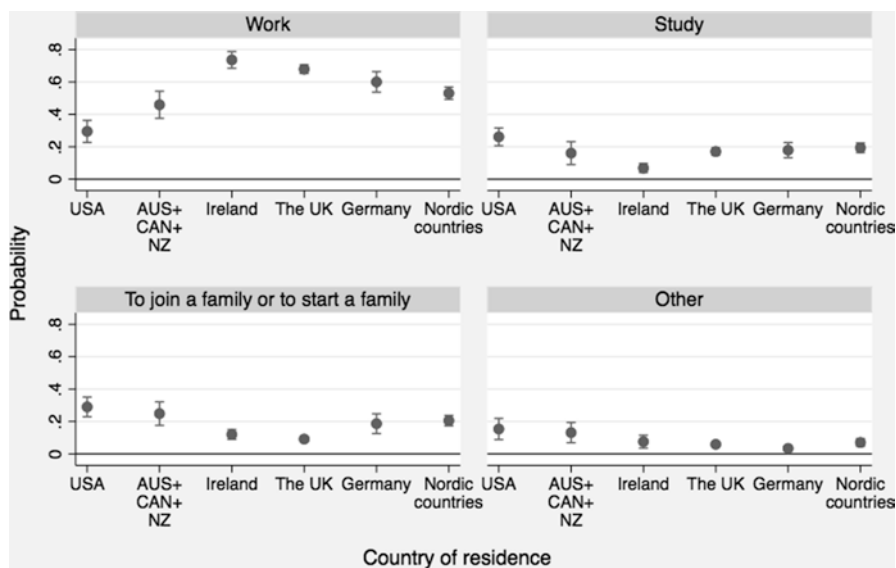
Int: Why?

Resp: I don’t know, because of listening to her saying that everything is better in the United States and the grass is greener there.

Int: What was the most exciting thing in your aunt’s stories that made you willing to go to the United States?

Resp: I remember she told me: ‘If you work, you will earn money. If you work hard, you will succeed.’ And she said that it is not the same here, in Latvia. (Jana, Latvian, 30 years old, emigrated in 2000)

However, it would be misleading to consider the ‘new’ Latvian emigrants solely as economic refugees. The data from the survey of Latvians abroad suggest that Latvian emigrants who travel to the United States do not have work as the most popular reason for the departure and is significantly lower than emigrants to European countries (see Fig. 10.1).



**Fig. 10.1** The main purpose for leaving Latvia (predictive margins with 95% confidence intervals, full model (see Appendix, Table 10.2, Models (5)–(8))

Source: The author, based on *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey

In general, ‘work’ as the main reason for leaving is less common for Latvian emigrants in the United States compared to other countries included in the model. Respondents who chose ‘other reason’ for emigration did have a chance to write their own reason for emigration. It turns out that the majority of those respondents had difficulties naming a single reason for departure – many of them left the space blank next to the ‘other reason’. In cases where the respondents have used this space and provided a single reason, the answers are very different and do not overlap with each other. For instance, one of the respondents reveals that she ‘felt unhappy, misunderstood and depressed in Latvia’ while another decided to ‘start a new life after the divorce’. There are also answers such as adoption, religious reasons and discrimination towards sexual minorities as well as one who replied simply ‘[to get] away from my parents’. Many of these answers speak to psychological rather than economic reasons for departure. Other reasons for emigration to the United States besides the economic ones listed by the respondents in the survey are in line with the stories from the interviews. Baiba, a 55 year old lady from Latvia explained it in detail:

If we think about my situation, about the relations between men and women at my age in Latvia, [...] I was considered an old lady seven years ago in Latvia. Well, here I am not considered an old lady. I am a normal woman. It is important [...] that you are perceived as a woman. I was divorced in Latvia and for this reason... I had a job in Latvia, I liked it, I had everything. I had everything, ... which I liked, but still somehow, I felt that I cannot find a partner my age in Latvia, because all men of my age – obviously – look at the younger women. So that was one of the reasons [for the departure] ... to which others were added. (Baiba, Latvian, 55 years old, USA, emigrated in 2007)

The variety of reasons for leaving hampers the emergence or existence of an imagined community among the ‘new’ Latvian emigrants in the United States because of the lack of a traumatic experience in the past which would unite them. As one of the emigrants argued, the fact that all emigrants ‘are not in Latvia’ is simply not enough for identification with other emigrants because ‘there is too little in common... it is not sufficient’ (Daina, Latvian, 29 years old, USA, emigrated in 2011). In other words, respondents do not feel part of a community: neither with those who arrived in the United States shortly after World War II nor with those who travelled there recently.

#### ***10.4.2 Social Memory and Identity Among ‘New’ Latvian Emigrants***

A crucial element for an imagined community is a more general social memory rather than the most recent one; namely, the reason for emigration. For this reason, this section deals with social memory and its role in the identity among the ‘new’ Latvian emigrants. As emphasized by Michael Lambek and Paul Antze, memory is shaped in part by the narrative forms and conventions of our time, place and position (Lambek and Antze 1996, p. XVI). They argue that any discussion of memory must examine the institutional forms, social relations and discursive spaces in which knowledge about memory is produced. In Latvia, Mārtiņš Kaprāns and Vita Zelče have described the case of social memory as ‘amnesia of memory for the period before the 20th century’ (Kaprāns and Zelče 2011, p. 45). Only the events of twentieth century are commemorated and forms the individual and collective identity.

The interviews with the respondents for this chapter suggest that the social memory of the ‘new’ Latvian emigrants does not differ significantly from those in Latvia. However, it is more common for the ‘new’ Latvian emigrants to concentrate on the very recent historical events, starting from the regaining of independence in 1991 and leading to joining the European Union and NATO. In other words, the temporal dimension of social memory for the new migrants is even shorter than that of Latvians in Latvia. It coincides with a low level of participation in traditional Latvian festivities and commemorations of events in history.

Despite the fact that all respondents mention the regaining of Latvia’s independence in 1991, no-one commemorates it on May 4th – a holiday in Latvia devoted to this occasion. Moreover, when diaspora organisations are commemorating any of the events from the official commemoration calendar of Latvia, the ‘new’ Latvian emigrants do not feel the need to take part: ‘I know there is something going on at the embassy, but I have never attended these. I have simply been somewhere else.’ (Zane, Latvian, 26 years old, USA, emigrated in 2011).

However, there is a different tendency regarding the traditional festivities, particularly the *Jāņi* celebration of the Summer solstice at the end of June. Almost all of the respondents celebrate *Jāņi* and most of them do it with others. For many respondents, it is the only time of the year when they visit and come into contact with Latvian diaspora organisations:



I have celebrated *Jāņi* in many places, but the best one is in Piesāule. It is in New York state, next to Boston. Some of the things they do there I have never done before. They go in circles and from one house to another to sing *Līgo* songs. [...] I grew up in Latvia, but these traditions were not followed there. (Elīna, Latvian, 31 years old, USA, emigrated in 2011)

At the same time another respondent, who arrived in the United States at preliminary school age and considers herself integrated in the Latvian community which has existed in the United States since World War II, believes that the way *Jāņi* is celebrated in Latvia is the best way:

The ideal way [to celebrate *Jāņi*] is when I am in the countryside in Latvia. Every time I do it, it has been an outstanding experience. I really feel that it is authentic, and I am very excited to the extent that I believe I could live forever in Latvia. There are always sauna and then everybody jumps into the lake; girls collect flowers from the meadow and make garlands. It is done here in American *Jāņi* as well, but the feeling is not the same. (Paula, Latvian, 26 years old, USA, emigrated in 1995)

In cases where respondents have attended events in the United States, organized by Latvian organizations, they feel that they have a different understanding about how the celebration should have been organised. One respondent reveals that her ideas and suggestions, which she refers as 'my Latvian traditions in organising events' do not find support among Latvian diaspora organisations. She believes that 'simply the traditions [in the United States] are different and the circumstances are different, and probably for both sides [those who emigrated from Latvia recently and those who left shortly after World War II] it is hard to understand [each other]' (Baiba, Latvian, 55 years old, emigrated in 2007).

One of the respondents does not take part in events arranged by Latvian diaspora organisations because 'the Latvia which they consider as theirs is not what I consider to be my Latvia' (Jānis, Latvian, 27 years old, USA, emigrated in 2006). These differences in understanding are, in the opinion of the respondent, as deep as they are mutually exclusive. Moreover, Jānis' Latvia is not an image of a particular imagined community, it is simply 'my Latvia' – his own 'personal Latvia'. In other words, he associates with it individually, not at the collective level.

This individualism appears in the commemoration practices. For many, Latvian Independence Day on November 18th is not associated with events arranged by Latvian diaspora organisations. Instead they celebrate it 'internally' while others have the feeling of celebration because of the increase in communication with Latvia (pictures on social networks, e-mails and telephone calls to relatives).

[On November 18th] I take Riga Black Balsam and rye bread with me and I tell everybody that it is our Independence Day. [...] It is important that my colleagues and study mates would understand why this is important for me. (Daina, Latvian, 29 years old, USA, emigrated in 2011)

However, the existence of alternative commemorative practices among 'new' Latvian emigrants are rare. Usually the commemorative days are celebrated among family members or not celebrated at all. The lack among the 'new' Latvian emigrants to associate with commemorative practices performed both in Latvia and among Latvian diaspora organisations increases their distance from the both communities.



### 10.4.3 *Communication with Those at Home*

Despite the fact that there is no strong social memory or common reason for emigration among the 'new' Latvian emigrants, they do have the attributes of a transnational community. First of all, the communication with Latvia intensifies during the commemorative days. Secondly, it is not the only time the 'new' Latvian emigrants communicate with Latvia. They do so on a regular basis by reading Latvian news portals and communicating with friends and relatives through e-mails, phone calls and social networks. The use of media and communications is crucial part of transnational identity for Latvians abroad.

One of the respondents reveals that there have been moments in her life when she lived according to Latvian time despite the fact that she was on the other side of the Atlantic. The reason was that she was helping her daughter in Latvia to write her thesis. At one moment she realised: 'I am forcing myself to think that I am in the United States' (Baiba, Latvian, 55 years old, USA, emigrated in 2007). For many 'new' Latvian emigrants Latvia and the United States are not two completely different and distinct territories and they try to bring them as close to each other as possible. As one of the respondents suggests, there is a small possibility that those who have emigrated will return to Latvia, however, it is possible that 'they will have a house, family, kids and a main place of residence in Latvia, but still spend some 30-50% of their time abroad somewhere else in Europe' (Jānis, Latvian, 27 years old, USA, emigrated in 2006).

In many cases, the communication with Latvia among 'new' Latvian emigrants brings separation from those in Latvia, as well as visits to the homeland increasing the psychological distance from friends and relatives. In some cases, it comes together with a detachment from Americans in the United States. One of the respondents says that she is too 'American' for Latvians in Latvia, but too 'Eastern European' for Americans:

Int: Do you believe you have become American to some extent?

Resp: I don't know. People tell me that I am. However, I don't really know what they mean by that. Honestly, I don't know.

Int: People in Latvia or people...

Resp: People in Latvia. In the United States absolutely no – everybody says; fuck, you are so, so Eastern European! I really don't know [why]... (Daina, Latvian, 29 years old, USA, emigrated in 2011)

Even more detachment is visible among Latvian emigrants from ethnic minorities:

I am an ethnic Russian from Latvia. I cannot say to other Russians that I am Russian, but for Latvians I am Russian. [...] It is very important for me that people consider me Latvian. I don't like it if they think I am from Russia. (Valda, Russian, 37 years old, USA, emigrated in 2004)

Hence, the existing communication with Latvians 'back home' does not encourage stronger ties, but instead hinders the formation of transnational community among the 'new' Latvian emigrants.

### 10.4.4 *Relations with Other Latvians*

Among the ‘new’ Latvian emigrants there is a trend of avoiding socialisation with other Latvians abroad. That is visible both in the interviews and in the survey of Latvians abroad. As one of the respondents explained:

I will tell you one thing I heard from one person when I went back to the United States. He said to me while visiting me here in the United States: ‘I have never understood why Latvians – those who are living here – communicate exclusively with [other] Latvians. What are you doing in the United States if you want to be among Latvians? Then live at home! Be in Latvia! If you want to be in that country [the United States], then have a reason, get involved! If you are there because of that culture and the people, then [...] follow that lifestyle, don’t just stay among Latvians. Why would you?’ (Anonymous)

I do have contacts and relations with Latvians but most of the time I am with locals – not only Americans, but [also] I have friends from Poland, who have lived here for many years. Mostly, I have international friends whom I met here. (Elīna, Latvian, 31 years old, USA, emigrated 2011)

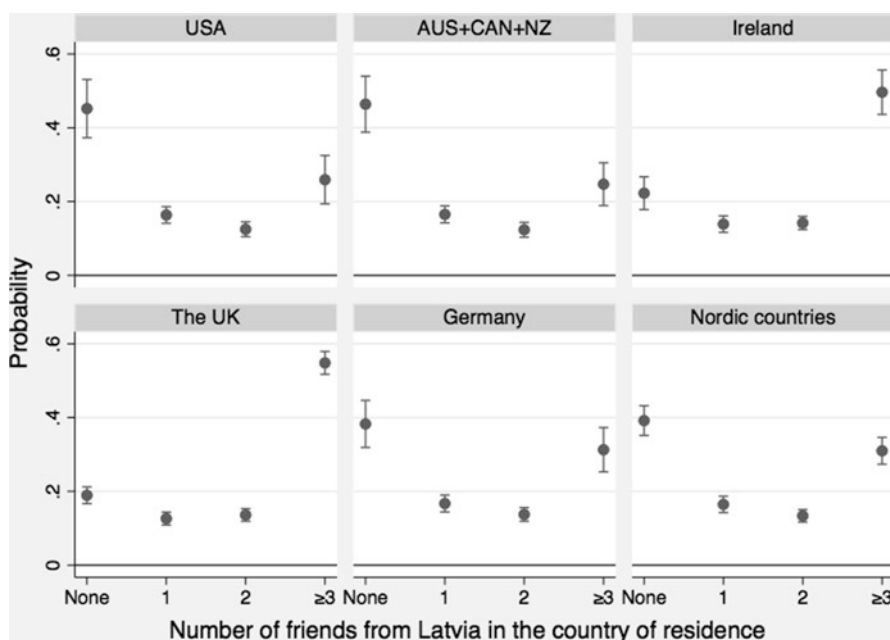
The survey of Latvians abroad confirms this tendency for ‘new’ Latvian emigrants to have fewer social ties with other Latvian emigrants in the United States. According to the results, those Latvian emigrants who reside in the United States have fewer close friends from Latvia in their country of residence. The probability is much higher in the United Kingdom and Ireland also when controlled for gender, age or any other variable. Most often (~65% probability), for ‘new’ Latvian emigrants in the United States there will be ‘no friends’ or ‘one friend’ from Latvia (Fig.10.2).

While ‘new’ Latvian emigrants do not socialise with other Latvians in the United States, those who live in the United Kingdom or Ireland have a higher probability of having more than three friends from Latvia compared to having no friends from Latvia at all.

Additionally, it has to be noted that the wealth of the individual has a positive effect on socialisation with other Latvians abroad. It coincides with the argument that involvement in the events of the Latvian diaspora means significant financial investments (Garoza 2011, pp.137–145).

The interviews with the ‘new’ Latvian emigrants shows that there is a greater avoidance of Latvians from the earlier emigration waves, namely the World War II refugees. One of them believes that those who emigrated to the United States after World War II are, in a way, afraid of those who have arrived comparatively recently:

I have a feeling that Latvian-Americans, the new generation, they socialise a lot with other Latvian-Americans, American Latvians, but they are afraid of genuine Latvians. They consider that those genuine Latvians (how to say it) will destroy their illusions regarding Latvia. [...] They truly want to be a part of Latvia, but they know they are not. They are afraid of genuine Latvians. They are somewhat jealous. They want to belong. It is hard to describe, honestly. (Zane, Latvian, 26 years old, USA, emigrated in 2011)



**Fig. 10.2** Number of friends from Latvia among Latvian emigrants (predictive margins with 95% confidence intervals, full model (see Appendix, Table 10.3, Model (2))

Source: The author, based on *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey

Another respondent notes that Latvian diaspora organisations have established a closed system of socialisation:

Since the very early days, since the 1950s, they have all graduated through their Latvian Sunday schools and various summer camps. They have grown up with it and have brought their kids and grandkids to these places and they have grown up in these places as well. There is an organisation called ALJA – American Latvian Youth Organisation. The members of this organisation are solely old Latvian kids; those who have arrived from Latvia recently are not in this organisation. Maybe one or two, but that's it! They have a different mentality, different thinking, different conversations and interests, maybe. (Zigmars, Latvian, 47 years old, USA, emigrated in 2009)

Zigmars believes that as a result it is hard for an adult to become a part of this community. Another respondent considers that she is a part of this diaspora community because she immigrated to the United States when she was very young.

I went to the summer campus in the Catskills and Garezers (a summer camp in Three Rivers, Michigan). I graduated Garezers and I have a very strong sense of belonging to this community of American Latvians. However, for those who have arrived [later] or they have not attended summer camps in Garezers or have been there only a little, or have grown up where there are no Latvian community centres, they probably do not have such relations or have stronger relations with the Latvians of Latvia. (Paula, Latvian, 26 years old, USA, emigrated in 1995)

There are also differences in the cultural background which can be illustrated by a story from one of the respondents about when Imants Ziedonis (1933–2013), one of the most popular Latvian poets, passed away:

Right after he passed away, we wanted to get together and read some of his poetry. You know, there was this feeling that... a feeling that we want to come together as Latvians. Latvians, because the local ones [Latvians who emigrated to the United States shortly after World War II and their descendants], although they know Ziedonis and love him, they have not grown up with Ziedonis, they have not felt him the way we did, reading him as the only one. (Baiba, Latvian, 55 years old, USA, emigrated in 2007)

The psychological barrier emerges if there is ambiguity with the legal status of the new Latvian emigrant. Baiba believes that her legal status in the United States – which she describes as ‘stuck in a moment’ – has had an impact on the opinion of diaspora organisations towards her.

The gatherings by Latvians from the earlier emigration wave are very focused on ‘Latvianness’ and emphasise talking in the Latvian language rather than introducing various ways of spending one’s free time:

American-Latvians always have a feeling of festivity when they are all together and then everybody wants to celebrate. In comparison, when I socialise with my American friends here or even with friends of American-Latvians who live in the city, we [...] go to dinner [...], theatre or the opera. (Paula, Latvian, 26 years, old USA, emigrated in 1995)

Hence, the interaction and socialisation of Latvian emigrants from different migration waves and is remarkably low among the very recent emigrants, who arrived in the United States after 1991, due to a variety of reasons: cultural and socio-historical, legal as well as psychological.

#### ***10.4.5 Identity and Sense of Belonging Among the ‘New’ Latvian Emigrants***

Besides the everyday practices, such as socialising with other, it is important to explore the self-identification of ‘new’ Latvian emigrants. Do they consider themselves as Latvians, Americans, as both? Or, perhaps, as none of the above?

‘A Latvian from Latvia’, ‘a Latvian émigré’, ‘a man with Latvian roots’, ‘A new Latvian’ – these are just some of the ways ‘new’ Latvian emigrants refer to themselves since they left Latvia. It is not uncommon to find these terms juxtaposed and used as a way to distinguish themselves from ‘American-Latvian’, ‘Latvian-American’, ‘local’ or ‘Old Latvian’, referring to those emigrants who arrived in the United States after World War II.

As one of the respondents describes, her identity is compounded by two contradictory entities. On the one hand, there is a conservative Latvian nationalism, associated with the celebration of traditional festivities and by following Latvian

customs. It is not uncommon that this aspect of identity becomes stronger after leaving Latvia, as many respondents confirm, signalling the emergence of long-distance nationalism. On the other hand, it is a liberal cosmopolitanism resulting from being open to diversity and the effects of multiculturalism.

I am being pushed in two directions. On the one hand is the Latvianness, of which I am proud. It is all the song festivals and things like that. All that code, which we have from all these years, all pagan rituals in Christmas and so on. On the other hand... the other extreme is that I really want there to be equality among genders, with sexual minorities and races. It absolutely does not exist in Latvia. I would like both things ... These two entities are in a fight deep in me and currently the cosmopolitanism wins. However, the 'Latvianness' somewhere down there also exists. (Daina, Latvian, 29 years old, USA, emigrated in 2011)

When asked about the negative characteristics of Latvians, respondents most commonly mentioned conservatism, traditionalism and closeness. Some of the respondents are straightforward: they are not willing to live in such a society or have children in such an environment. 'The current level of tolerance in Latvia is not satisfactory for me and for this reason I do not feel part of it,' says one respondent (Jānis, Latvian, 27 years old, USA, emigrated in 2006). Another respondent (Daina, Latvian, 29 years old, USA, emigrated in 2011) thinks that Latvians are silent when a particular group in the society is being offended, for instance, if a prosecutor publicly states that a person who has been subject to rape or a sexual assault is partly an accessory to the crime (see Dzērve 2014).

Additionally, as argued by another respondent, the Latvian media is full of unimportant stories and discussions, in contrast to the United Kingdom or the United States, where the main discussions are about economics.

Resp: If you go through the Latvian news, everything we are talking about are topics, which, honestly, if there was a stable working environment, these topics would be resolved sooner or later. [Now] these topics are taken out of context and blown up as something very important.

Int: Which ones, for example?

Resp: Problems with Russians. Obviously, there is a war going on now [...], and for this reason it is more important right now. However, on the very basis if 400 thousand people have left Latvia and it is both Latvians and Russians, then I think that is three times more important. (Sandis, Latvian, 31 year old, USA, emigrated in 2005)

At the same time, Latvian diaspora organisations are not the ones which would promote cosmopolitanism, multiculturalism and liberal values, which are important for the respondents regarding Latvia. As such, Latvian diaspora organisations do not embody what social anthropologist Dzenovska calls 'a diasporic future', which is based on 'embeddedness in recognisable relations' rather than on 'symbolic identification with the nation state' (Dzenovska 2012, p. 182). For Dzenovska, such a 'diasporic life' is a catalyst for transformation of the society back home because the life experience of the emigrants 'at the time they return [to Latvia] will prohibit simply returning [to their] previous life environment, but [they] will push for a change' (Dzenovska 2012, p. 182). Rather than creativity and innovation, respondents expect conservatism and repetition from Latvian diaspora organisations.

Not all the respondents consider the Latvian language as a part of Latvianness. For many, it is not a value at all to the extent that their descendants should definitely know it.

If you ask me if I consider whether it is important that my children should be raised in a Latvian environment, then my answer is no. Obviously it is nice to know the language your grandparents speak and it is important, but at the same time it is not a language which will give many opportunities. It is just sentimental memories. The Latvian language will not open new doors. (Māris, Latvian, 33 years old, USA, emigrated in 2002)

Hence for many respondents, language is an economic category rather than a cultural one. They look at Latvian citizenship the same way. They have all heard about the relatively recent amendments in Latvian law on citizenship, which allows dual citizenship. Some of the respondents already have both passports and in some cases acquired it for their children as well. However, this is based on rationality rather than sentiment. In particular, Latvian citizenship as a passport of the European Union member countries gives relatively easy access to the European labour market, as well as other rights such as acquiring real estate and travelling within Europe. The political rights which are granted together with a Latvian passport are not the main interest. In fact, many of them consider that they should abstain from voting in Latvian elections if they don't live there: "As I emigrated, I don't have the right to make a decision for those who stayed in Latvia. [...] The destiny of Latvia has to be decided by the people who are active, and, foremost, who live in Latvia" (Zigmars, Latvian, 47 years old, USA, emigrated in 2009). Another respondent believes that the moment he acquires American citizenship, taking part in Latvian politics would compromise him: 'I need to stay loyal to the United States. I wouldn't like it if there was anything that would influence or make an impression that it [the level of loyalty towards the United States] has changed' (Māris, Latvian, 33 years old, USA, emigrated in 2002).

Would that mean that the 'new' Latvian emigrants integrate well within the broader American society? More than two thirds of the respondents interviewed were in relationships, but the ethnic backgrounds of partners were very diverse: only two respondents had Latvian partners but six had American partners at the time of the interview. Also the survey data reveals that having relationships with a Latvian or Russian significantly decreases the chance of having local friends by 9 percentage points. On the other hand, speaking the language of the country of residence increases the chance of having local friends by 11 percentage points.

The interviews with the 'new' Latvian emigrants helps to understand the findings in the survey of Latvians abroad. Although many of the emigrants interviewed have American friends, in general their attitude towards them is cautious if not critical. Most commonly, respondents consider Americans more friendly and open than Latvians back home, but feel that only some of them can be considered truthful and close.

In other words, although it is easier to communicate with Americans on a daily basis, it is hard to establish close relationships:

It is hard to be real friends with Americans. While everything goes well you are friends, but once something happens, they are gone into the blue sky' (Zigmars, Latvian, 47 years old, USA, emigrated in 2009)

Mostly, respondents have friends who are connected with them through work or studies (if they have studied or are studying), where there are people of very diverse ethnic backgrounds.

However, keeping a distance from Americans does not mean that respondents are willing to emphasise their Latvian identity. In some cases, the local identity becomes the most important: 'I believe I am Latvian, but I am also a New Yorker. I do not consider myself to be American. I do not have any interest either in calling myself an American or becoming an American in some kind of form' (Jānis, Latvian, 27 years old, USA, emigrated in 2006).

On the other hand, respondents do have a strong feeling of being European. This aspect of identity unites all the respondents irrespective of their ethnic background. For this reason, it is necessary to broaden the notion of transnationality beyond the territory of a nation state. Although it is not the most important aspect of identity for the respondents, it is free from negative judgments.

It is impossible to become American. [...] Maybe after 50 years of living in the United States [you will], but you still won't be a genuine American. Same as my husband [an American] will never become a Latvian. [I am] European because by living so far away from Latvia I feel at home when I visit any European country. (Zane, Latvian, 26 years old, USA, emigrated in 2011)

Another respondent, who has lived in the United States for 12 years, identifies himself as 'an American with European roots' (Māris, Latvian, 33 years old, USA, emigrated in 2002). This is an extreme position in which Latvian identity is completely excluded, but it characterises the overall tendency: the most sustainable identity for the 'new' Latvian emigrants is a European one. Besides, this identity is socio-cultural rather than political as respondents are not taking an active part or have any interest in pan-European politics, such as voting in the European Parliament elections.

Finally, an important perspective on the 'new' Latvian emigrants is the attitude towards migration. For many, Latvia has been only the point of departure to start a lifelong journey. In the same manner, the United States is not the end of their travel. Returning back home at one point in this journey is not a necessity. It is one of the major differences with those Latvians who emigrated to the United States after World War II (Hinkle 2006). As such, the 'new' Latvian emigrants are having a weak attachment to their homeland and are not genuinely forming diasporic or transnational community, but are rather explorers:

I don't regret a single thing in my life, although I am running around and don't settle down. There are sometimes such moments in life, when I am ready to go to the Amazon simply to teach English for kids. (Elīna, Latvian, 31 year old, USA, emigrated in 2011)

Many respondents reveal that they do not have a strong attachment to the United States, its culture, politics and nature, and hypothetically they would be ready to leave any time if they needed to, or if the opportunity arose.

I have moved from Latvia to Philadelphia, then to Indiana, and then here. I have always told my wife: 'Never say never'. I have never planned to live in the United States. If someone had asked me 11 years ago where I will live today, I would have told them that I will live in Latvia (Rihards, Latvian, 34 years old, USA, emigrated in 2006)

For this reason, 'new' Latvian emigrants have what Bruneau (2010) calls a 'nomadic identity', referring to Allain Tarius' fieldwork among Mexican and Bolivian emigrants in the United States. 'Their host places are only points of passage or waystations, not places of settlement and integration. The only essential place for them is the one of their origin, whence they leave with their goods; they return regularly, and invest their earnings there. They never actually leave: it is their only base,' notes Bruneau (2010, p. 46). However, there are crucial differences between Bruneau's described nomads and the 'new' Latvian emigrants in the United States. The latter ones have weak connections with Latvia and they do not migrate back and forth to Latvia. Rarely do respondents believe they will return to Latvia for a period longer than a vacation, and especially not in the near future. As one of the respondents reveals, 'I like to search for new things, new life. I have lived in Latvia for 20 years and I believe that is enough' (Valda, Russian, 37 years old, USA, emigrated in 2004). Another respondent describes the peculiarity of the reciprocity between him and his country of origin in a more detailed manner:

Resp: I got my education in Latvia and I am very, very thankful for that. To some extent I feel I have not paid back this support. However, at the same time my parents [in Latvia] do not have the best pensions.

Int: Do you think you will give more to Latvia in the future?

Resp: I don't think it will happen. (Māris, Latvian, 33 years old, emigrated in 2002)

The high level of mobility potential explains why many respondents consider United States citizenship in the same way as Latvian. For many, it is a kind of travel insurance as the United States has embassies in almost every country in the world.

## 10.5 Conclusions

The landscape of the 'new' Latvian emigrants interviewed is very diverse. However, some of the trends are common for all of them. They have weak connections not only to Latvia but also with other emigrants in the United States. Although there are some aspects of a transnational lifestyle, the 'new' Latvian emigrants should be considered more as having a nomadic identity with a pronounced separateness. For this reason, it is possible to argue that there is only a single diaspora community in the United States, mainly formed of those who arrived in the United States after World War II, and their descendants. The 'new' Latvian emigrants do not associate



themselves with this community, nor do they connect to a large extent with Latvians back home and, therefore, cannot be considered as part of a transnational community. The different waves of migration have created different identities. The post-WWII Latvian refugees manifest long-distance nationalism with their engagement in diaspora organizations and cultivation of national identity through commemorative practices and gatherings. Latvians who have arrived in the United States post 1991 show increasing individualism and cosmopolitanism.

There are many reasons for the lack of strong community among the 'new' Latvian emigrants and their disinterest in socialising with those who arrived before 1991. However, it is necessary to emphasise the other side of the coin, i.e., the attitudes and judgments which the 'new' Latvian emigrants experience both from diaspora organisations and from relatives and friends back home. The unsuccessful cooperation with diaspora organizations also weakens the national identity among the emigrants. The same is true when visits back in Latvia is full of resentment.

In other words, although the 'new' Latvian emigrants are willing to develop transnational relations, they often feel embittered by these connections and become nomads who look further afield.

It could be that the United States is an exceptional case because of the different reasons people have for leaving Latvia in the past. The distance between Latvia and the United States is much greater than with any European country. Although migration scholar Bela (2014) claims that proximity is not crucial in the formation of a transnational identity, this study shows that it cannot be completely ignored. In many cases there are no statistically significant differences between the United States and Australia, Canada and New Zealand. The distance is especially important in the case of Latvians having friends in the country of residence. The further the country is from Latvia, the fewer Latvian friends will be around the new emigrant.

Hence, to some extent the 'new' Latvian emigrants in the United States do successfully integrate into the host country, although they do so while maintaining a distance: retaining their own individuality, being neutral and open to others.

In particular, the emergence of two identities can be identified: firstly, the local one; and secondly, the cultural one. The local identity is connected with the city in which the individual lives, for example, New York. The cultural one is connected at the pan-European level rather than with the country of origin. This identity brings with it the possibility of the boundaries of transnational identity being reconsidered and expanding beyond the 'nation state' or 'ethnic group'.

## Appendix

**Table 10.1** Variables used in regressions

Variable	Observations	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Categories	Remarks
Main purpose: What was the main purpose of your leaving Latvia?	6002	1.69	0.99	1	4	(1) Work (2) Study (3) To join my family or to start a family; (4) Other (fill in)	Dependent variable for regression models in Table 10.2
How many of your friends are from Latvia and live in your country of residence?	5601	1.67	1.30	0	3	(0) None (1) One; (2) Two; (3) Three or more	Dependent variable for regression models in Table 10.3
Country of residence	6002	4.25	1.25	1	6	(1) USA (2) Australia, Canada and New Zealand (3) Ireland; (4) The United Kingdom; (5) Germany (6) Nordic countries (Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Iceland)	
Diaspora: Are you involved in diaspora organizations?	6002	0.09	0.28	0	1	(0) No, (1) Yes	
Gender	6002	0.69	0.46	0	1	(0) Male; (1) Female	With imputations
Education	6002	2.34	0.64	1	3	(1) Low; (2) Middle; (3) High	With imputations
Knowledge of local language: How would you rate your skills/proficiency in the local language now?	6002	4.12	1.17	1	6	(1) Very poor or none; (2) Poor; (3) Mediocre; (4) Good; (5) Very good, fluent; (6) Native language	
Age	6002	2.61	1.15	1	6	(1) 15–24; (2) 25–34; (3) 35–44; (4) 45–54; (5) 55–64; (6) 65+	With imputations
Time abroad: Approximately how long (in total) have you lived outside Latvia?	6002	3.26	1.12	1	5	(1) Less than 1 year; (2) 1–2 years (3) 3–5 years; (4) 6–10 years; (5) More than 10 years	

(continued)

**Table 10.1** (continued)

Variable	Observations	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Categories	Remarks
Emigration wave	6002	4.71	1.05	2	6	(2) 1991–1999; (3) 2000–2003; (4) 2004–2008; (5) 2009–2011; (6) After 2011	
Occupation: What is your current occupation?	6002	1.38	0.74	1	5	(1) Employed (2) Economically inactive; (3) Student (4) Retired (5) Other	
Wealth: Taking into account your household's total income, is your household able to make ends meet (i.e., pay for the necessities of everyday life)?	6002	3.70	1.04	1	5	(1) With great difficulty; (2) With difficulty; (3) With some difficulty; (4) Fairly easily; (5) Easily;	
Kids: Do your kids currently live with you in your household?	6002	0.28	0.45	0	1	(0) No; (1) Yes	
Partner: What ethnic group does your spouse belong to?	6002	0.78	0.76	0	2	(0) No partner; (1) Latvian/Russian; (2) Other	
Questionnaire language	6002	1.07	0.26	1	2	(1) Latvian (2) Russian	

**Table 10.2** What was the main purpose of your leaving Latvia? (Multinomial logistic regression)

Variables	Work	Study	Join a family or to start a family	Other
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Country (baseline: USA)				
Australia, Canada and New Zealand		−0.930** (0.432)	−0.597* (0.352)	−0.601 (0.459)
Ireland		−2.252*** (0.337)	−1.799*** (0.286)	−1.625*** (0.443)
The United Kingdom		−1.262*** (0.263)	−1.988*** (0.251)	−1.790*** (0.332)
Germany		−1.089*** (0.309)	−1.153*** (0.307)	−2.220*** (0.372)
Nordic countries		−0.886*** (0.275)	−0.933*** (0.257)	−1.371*** (0.363)

(continued)

**Table 10.2** (continued)

Variables	Work	Study	Join a family or to start a family	Other
Constant		−0.121 (0.244)	−0.0169 (0.229)	−0.651** (0.308)
Observations	6002 (5)	6002 (6)	6002 (7)	6002 (8)
Country (baseline: USA)				
Australia, Canada and New Zealand		−1.040** (0.473)	−0.580 (0.366)	−0.829* (0.439)
Ireland		−1.917*** (0.425)	−1.831*** (0.327)	−1.692*** (0.521)
The United Kingdom		−0.859*** (0.283)	−1.821*** (0.286)	−1.808*** (0.403)
Germany		−0.359 (0.330)	−0.894*** (0.324)	−2.279*** (0.443)
Nordic countries		−0.0711 (0.299)	−0.671** (0.300)	−1.201*** (0.431)
Diaspora		0.527* (0.281)	0.383* (0.198)	−0.0414 (0.298)
Gender		0.249 (0.196)	1.309*** (0.218)	−0.113 (0.202)
Education (baseline: Low)				
Middle		0.320 (0.342)	−0.444* (0.247)	−0.268 (0.291)
High		1.723*** (0.380)	0.152 (0.278)	−0.113 (0.276)
Knowledge of the local language (baseline: very poor or none)				
Poor		−0.506 (0.838)	−0.262 (0.558)	0.257 (0.568)
Mediocre		−0.424 (0.817)	−0.882* (0.501)	0.762 (0.504)
Good		−0.463 (0.800)	−0.960** (0.485)	0.780 (0.498)
Very good		0.203 (0.805)	−0.629 (0.502)	1.144** (0.506)
Native language		−0.511 (0.845)	−1.813*** (0.568)	−0.0888 (0.562)
Age (baseline: 15–24)				
25–34		−1.601*** (0.251)	−0.178 (0.259)	0.614** (0.310)
35–44		−2.596*** (0.393)	−0.616** (0.297)	0.412 (0.345)

(continued)

**Table 10.2** (continued)

Variables	Work	Study	Join a family or to start a family	Other
45–54		–4.534*** (0.632)	–0.618** (0.306)	0.416 (0.374)
55–64		–4.422*** (0.685)	0.0132 (0.383)	0.144 (0.496)
65+		–4.466*** (1.450)	–1.218* (0.701)	–1.319 (1.135)
Time abroad (baseline: less than a year)				
1–2 years		–0.0687 (0.493)	–0.522 (0.332)	–1.230*** (0.434)
3–5 years		0.497 (0.483)	–0.612 (0.421)	–0.525 (0.486)
6–10 years		0.972* (0.529)	–0.000380 (0.603)	–0.310 (0.486)
More than 10 years		2.367*** (0.610)	–0.113 (0.644)	–0.853* (0.513)
Emigration wave (baseline: 1991–1999)				
2000–2003		–1.126** (0.476)	–0.146 (0.429)	–0.730 (0.510)
2004–2008		–0.0535 (0.511)	0.494 (0.529)	–0.493 (0.478)
2009–2011		–0.123 (0.567)	0.470 (0.535)	–0.649 (0.556)
After 2011		–0.0507 (0.589)	0.907 (0.660)	0.404 (0.543)
Occupation (baseline: employed)				
Economically inactive		0.522** (0.235)	1.219*** (0.179)	0.744*** (0.277)
Student		3.189*** (0.358)	2.488*** (0.310)	2.315*** (0.455)
Retired		0.450 (1.821)	1.979*** (0.687)	2.703*** (0.973)
Other		–0.157 (0.657)	0.766 (0.599)	2.700*** (0.755)
Wealth (baseline: with great difficulty)				
With difficulty		–0.336 (0.441)	0.487 (0.442)	–0.105 (0.630)
With some difficulty		–0.576 (0.400)	0.868** (0.416)	0.241 (0.593)
Fairly easily		–0.551 (0.397)	0.746* (0.412)	–0.0127 (0.598)

(continued)

**Table 10.2** (continued)

Variables	Work	Study	Join a family or to start a family	Other
Easily		−0.589 (0.407)	0.535 (0.413)	0.467 (0.608)
Kids (baseline: none)		−0.497** (0.223)	0.390** (0.172)	0.0105 (0.237)
Partner (baseline: none)				
Latvian/Russian		−0.269 (0.205)	0.518*** (0.195)	0.00715 (0.212)
Other		0.436* (0.251)	1.145*** (0.220)	0.734*** (0.276)
Language of questionnaire		0.859*** (0.205)	−0.410 (0.260)	−0.184 (0.297)
Constant		−1.588 (1.103)	−1.387 (1.039)	−1.244 (1.063)
Observations	6002	6002	6002	6002

\*\*\*p < 0.001, \*\*p < 0.01, \*p < 0.05, ~p < 0.1; Robust standard errors in parenthesis

**Table 10.3** How many of your friends are natives of your country of residence? (negative binomial regression model, incidence rate coefficients)

Variables	(1) flv	(2) flv
Country (baseline: USA)		
Australia, Canada and New Zealand	−0.0450 (0.244)	−0.0624 (0.230)
Ireland	1.061*** (0.218)	0.878*** (0.228)
The United Kingdom	1.259*** (0.186)	1.149*** (0.185)
Germany	0.285 (0.215)	0.228 (0.211)
Nordic countries	0.270 (0.192)	0.0960 (0.193)
Diaspora		0.624*** (0.149)
Gender		−0.0597 (0.104)
Education (baseline: low)		
Middle		−0.158 (0.152)
High		−0.274* (0.165)

(continued)

**Table 10.3** (continued)

	(1)	(2)
Variables	flv	flv
Knowledge of the local language (baseline: Very poor or none)		
Poor		−0.471 (0.324)
Mediocre		−0.877*** (0.280)
Good		−0.689** (0.277)
Very good		−0.671** (0.287)
Native language		−0.234 (0.300)
Age (baseline: 15–24)		
25–34		−0.0534 (0.137)
35–44		−0.236 (0.171)
45–54		−0.0766 (0.199)
55–64		−0.0382 (0.233)
65+		0.0603 (0.626)
Time abroad (baseline: less than a year)		
1–2 years		0.300 (0.225)
3–5 years		0.243 (0.228)
6–10 years		−0.201 (0.294)
More than 10 years		−0.411 (0.331)
Emigration wave (baseline: 1991–1999)		
2000–2003		0.285 (0.315)
2004–2008		−0.283 (0.317)
2009–2011		−0.757** (0.323)
After 2011		−1.005*** (0.365)

(continued)

**Table 10.3** (continued)

Variables	(1) flv	(2) flv
Occupation (baseline: employed)		
Economically inactive		0.0442 (0.142)
Student		−0.351** (0.160)
Retired		−0.879 (0.713)
Other		−1.446*** (0.648)
Wealth (baseline: with great difficulty)		
With difficulty		0.531** (0.266)
With some difficulty		0.410* (0.238)
Fairly easily		0.460* (0.241)
Easily		0.905*** (0.233)
Kids (baseline: none)		0.202* (0.116)
Partner (baseline: none)		
Latvian/Russian		0.198* (0.117)
Other		−0.526*** (0.145)
Language of questionnaire		0.449*** (0.128)
/cut1	−0.188 (0.173)	−0.685 (0.565)
/cut2	0.487*** (0.174)	0.0335 (0.566)
/cut3	1.066*** (0.176)	0.652 (0.567)
Observations	5601	5601

Robust standard errors in parentheses

\*\*\*p &lt; 0.01, \*\*p &lt; 0.05, \*p &lt; 0.1



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## Chapter 11

# ‘I Am One of Them’: Exploring the Communication of Identity of Latvian Migrants on Social Networking Sites



Ianis Bucholtz and Laura Sūna

### 11.1 Introduction

Social media, especially social networking sites, are among today's most popular personal media (Lüders 2008), and they also are widely employed by migrants (Dekker and Engbersen 2014; Bucholtz 2018). Such sites have a variety of personalised connection features. This makes it easier for individuals to access both international and local information, and enables the development of interpersonal relationship networks (Zhang and Leung 2014).

Communication flows supported by personal media, including social networking sites, play a role in maintaining and strengthening transnational ties among migrants and their friends and acquaintances, and with relatives who live in different countries. These media are incorporated into the social activities of contemporary migrants, including those of the Latvian diaspora. In addition to keeping in touch with familiar people, they use them to locate other compatriots living in their host societies. Moreover, features available on social networking sites to access information and maintain diverse connections also have implications for the manifestation and negotiation of migrants' identities (see also Sūna, Chap. 9, this volume).

'Transnationalism and identity are concepts that inherently call for juxtaposition,' states Vertovec (2001, p. 573). According to him, transnational networks are held together by shared identity, a homeland and an association with that homeland's language and culture. However, contemporary migrants in their communities may develop and negotiate identities that embrace more than one physical space

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(Vertovec 2001). Thus, while many migrants retain a strong affiliation with their place of origin, their culture, ethnicity and identity processes are constantly shaped by their experiences and social environments in host societies, which are different from those in their homeland (Koroļeva, Chap. 4, this volume).

Vertovec (2009) also points to the prominence of communication technologies in the emergence of the contemporary forms of transnationalism. Phone calls, mass media accessible through satellite TV and other channels, exchanges of emails and the use of internet communication platforms allow migrants to maintain and expand their networks and enable speedy and intense communication across borders (Vertovec 2009, pp. 14–15). This is also the case for social networking sites, which are the focus of this study. However, since most people do not limit their communication and information-gathering activities to one type of media or one communication platform alone, it is not practical to isolate social networking sites from the general mix of media employed by migrants. Thus, while stressing the prominence of social networking sites as spaces where migrant connections are developed and maintained, we analyse them in the context of other means of interpersonal communication, such as Skype, chat applications or phone calls.

Based on interviews with Latvian migrants from various countries who are active users of social networking sites as well as data from *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey, this chapter examines the ethnic and transnational identities of migrants on social networking sites and other personal media. We pose the following research questions:

1. Which media do Latvian migrants use and which of these are the most popular?
2. How are media, including social networking sites, being employed to maintain migrant transnational networks and express the migrants' 'belonging' to the Latvian community?
3. How are Latvian migrant identities being manifested, negotiated and contested in online discussion spaces?

We argue that the facilitated access to Latvia-related information, formation of migrant online exchange groups and possibilities to maintain transnational social networks all contribute to 'doing identity' (Buckingham 2008). By the term 'social network' we understand a social structure that connects individuals who have relationships based on some level of acquaintance (Pescosolido 2007; Wellman 1988). In colloquial speech, social networking sites also are often referred to as 'social networks.' That, however, is a misnomer – this concept refers to ties maintained by individuals, whereas social networking sites provide only an online-based infrastructure for such networking. Many of the interviewees in this research project use the term 'social networks'; by which they mean social networking sites. This use of the concept is preserved in citations, but in the rest of the paper we maintain a strict distinction between 'social networks' as a general phenomenon intrinsic to all people regardless of whether they use the Internet or not, and 'social networking sites,' which are a type of online communication platform.

We start with a review of the role of online interpersonal connections in the development and maintenance of transnational migrant social networks. In the empirical part, we describe the place that social networking site use occupies in the media repertoire of Latvian migrants. Then we analyse how various types of media are employed to maintain their connections with friends, relatives and fellow compatriots and how exposure to Latvia-related media content helps them to maintain their ties with Latvia in general. Next, we go into the specifics of social networking site use with regard to the manifestation and negotiation of migrant identities. Finally, we illustrate the use of social networking sites in the development of hybrid identities (Brinkerhoff 2009; Hall 1992). On such communication platforms, migrants can more comfortably access diverse identity elements from more than one culture. Subsequently, a migrant can feel integrated and identify primarily with the host society, yet he or she may reject some of its norms or beliefs and choose Latvian alternatives instead.

## 11.2 Transnational Communication and Migrant Identities

Migration is a networked phenomenon. Units of migration are networks, rather than individuals or households (Tilly 1991). According to this interpretation, the first (pioneering) migrants are followed by others who have accessed the knowledge the pioneers have gathered through their own research and experience (Samers 2010, p. 97).

Migration networks are sustained through mediated connections. Before they move, contemporary migrants will have already employed various media widely, which allows them to gather information about resettlement and other opportunities in the prospective host countries. After their arrival in another country, the use of media, especially personal media, can facilitate the development of new acquaintances and help gather information about their new place of residence, as well as enable them to maintain contact with friends, relatives and other people back home (Horst 2006; Ros 2010). Ultimately, Hepp et al. (2012, p. 172) stress that contemporary migrant cultures should be understood as 'media cultures,' because the former can only be understood in relation to practices of media use: 'In this sense, migrants are nowadays mediatised; their articulation of a migrant identity is deeply interwoven with, and moulded by, different forms of media.'

Online interactive media are of particular importance in the realm of migrant communication. These provide important social spaces where migrants can access and develop transnational connections and express their identities (McGinnis et al. 2007). Many migrants are willing to maintain contact with both their country of origin and their compatriots living in the host country, and it is common to engage in various online and offline activities that are based on ethnic or national belonging. Schrooten (2012) stresses that 'online togetherness' in online social spaces is a

relevant part of migrants' offline lives, and these social spaces should not be artificially distinguished from each other.

Migrant identities in this paper are understood in the context of 'imagined communities'. Anderson (1991) used this concept to demonstrate that a nation is socially constructed or 'imagined' by people who perceive themselves to be part of this particular social group. 'The members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion,' writes Anderson (1991, p. 6). In his account, media are among the elements that create a shared information environment, thus promoting the development of a sense of belonging among the people who experience it. Through their use of various forms of media, migrants too manifest and negotiate their conception of the Latvian community and attribute particular characteristics to it, thus effectively 'imagining' it. However, transnational settings add a new dimension to this process. As argued by Robins (2003), contemporary migrants can inhabit and identify with more than one informational and national space simultaneously.

The processes of maintaining, negotiating and asserting migrants' identities are thus greatly influenced by the 'dual lives' many of them lead (Portes 1997). Migrants are willing to sustain their identification with their country of origin, but living in a host country also requires integration, which means at least partly accepting the norms and customs that dominate there. This dual affiliation with the home and host country can lead to loyalty dilemmas and complications in a migrant's relationship with his or her host country (Alonso and Oiarzabal 2010).

In this regard, a useful concept is that of 'hybrid identity', introduced by Hall (1992). Brinkerhoff (2009, 2010) employs this concept to describe how the members of diaspora combine elements of identity from their host and home countries. Brinkerhoff (2009) stresses that migrant online communities – that is, internet-based associations that provide the foundation of so-called 'digital diasporas' – are especially expedient in reconciling potentially conflicting social norms, customs or other defining elements that a person inherits from societies he or she belongs to, or has belonged to. In online environments, individuals can express themselves more freely and flexibly and conflate or experiment with different facets of their identities (Schmidt 2013). By using the opportunities that online social spaces provide, migrants can make their integration in the host society easier, if other aspects, such as offline-based connections, also encourage this process. Access to online communication spaces where migrants can create and maintain identities around their own cultural heritage thus helps to reduce the feeling of marginalisation in the diaspora and strengthens mechanisms of mutual support (Brinkerhoff 2009).

The identities of migrants are not fixed. They are regularly created and reproduced (Brinkerhoff 2009, p. 33). Brinkerhoff (2009) claims that conditions which help migrants maintain their identities and also deal with everyday situations in the host country reduce social stress and help them incorporate new ideas, values and interpretations in their frames of reference. The adaptation of communication tools and the use of media plays a crucial role in the development and maintenance of shared identities among members of diasporas (Georgiou 2006).

People have a wide range of personal media at their disposal, including cell phones, email, chat applications, Skype and other instant messaging and voice-over-IP services. However, social networking sites, which are widely employed by migrants, have a particularly prominent position in this mix. The use of these communication platforms and the diversity of features available allows migrants to fulfil numerous functions in their social lives, including one-to-one exchanges, communication within a group, dissemination of mass media information and the ability to locate and follow users that may or may not be familiar offline.

These uses of social networking sites have particular implications for transnational migration and the development of migrant communities in host countries. Dekker and Engbersen (2014) write that the use of social networking sites has a profound influence on migrant networks: migrants are able to maintain links with their friends and family members living in other countries, and these media platforms enable access to information and other resources needed to establish one's life in a host country. Such connectivity opportunities support migrant networks and make migration easier (Dekker and Engbersen 2014). Furthermore, Komito (2011) argues that social networking sites allow interpersonal connections to be maintained through the mere following of content published by others. Such monitoring of the activities of fellow migrants promotes an awareness of the presence of others and thus strengthens the sense of belonging to an ethnic community. These processes may facilitate further transnational migration. Unlike Brinkerhoff (2009, 2010), (Komito 2011) observed a detrimental effect that such a connectivity has on migrants' integration in the host society.

Online diaspora groups are one of the spheres of interaction that underpin the articulation, formation and maintenance of migrant identities. Analysis of the social interactions of migrants that take place there can provide insight into these phenomena. In this article, we are interested in the manifestation, contestation and negotiation of such identities as a mediated process within migrant networks.

### 11.3 Methodology

The main source of the empirical data is 20 semi-structured interviews with Latvian emigrants, which took place during the summer of 2014. Most of the interviewees were recruited on social networking sites used by these people; in many cases from Latvian migration-related groups or pages on Facebook and Draugiem.lv. Since Latvia has a sizeable Russian-speaking minority that does not use the Latvian-dominated Draugiem.lv, social networking sites V Kontakte and Odnoklassniki, which are preferred by Russian speakers, were also consulted. However, the responsiveness of Russian-speaking Latvians was low, thus the majority of the interviewees recruited are ethnic Latvians.

During the last 150 years or so, due to wars, economic struggles and political oppression, Latvia has experienced a number of waves of emigration (Apine 2003; Hazans, Chap. 3, this volume). Emigration during the twentieth century, especially

the flow of Latvian refugees after World War II, has led to the establishment of Latvian diaspora communities, predominantly in the United States, Brazil, Sweden and Australia. However, to conduct interviews for this research, we specifically recruited Latvians who represent the latest wave of emigration. That started after 2004, when Latvia joined the European Union (EU), and intensified during the global economic crisis of 2007–2008. While other new EU member states have also had waves of emigration, a particularly large proportion of the Latvian population has left (Hazans, Chap. 3, this volume; Hazans 2016). More than 9% of the Latvian population has emigrated since the beginning of the twenty-first century, (Hazans 2013).

Being first generation migrants, the participants in this study have direct experience of moving to another country, setting up their lives there and re-establishing interpersonal ties. This also means that the migrant group studied in this chapter is narrower than those described in other chapters of this volume. That was a deliberate choice. The social group studied here emigrated after the emergence of the widespread use of contemporary social media platforms, and they are the first generation of Latvian migrants able to employ social networking sites as part of their migration experience. Furthermore, young people in Latvia, as elsewhere in Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe, are more likely to migrate (Atoyan et al. 2016, p. 12; Hazans, Chap. 3, this volume), and at the same time, are more active users of social media (Aptauja.lv 2014).

All the interviewees are frequent users of Draugiem.lv or Facebook, and many of them actively take part in exchanges in migrant online groups on these sites. The recruitment approach, purposely selecting users who are the most active in these groups though either publishing posts or writing comments, allowed us to concentrate on communication practices and considerations in a group that is characterised by relatively uniform patterns of social networking site use.

Most of the interviews lasted between 1 and 1.5 h and were conducted on Skype while the participants were at home. Two of the participants were interviewed in face-to-face settings during their visit to Latvia. The sample consists of 15 female and 5 male participants, aged 22–57. Interviewees live in Norway, Germany (for discussion of Latvians in Germany, see Sūna, 9, this volume), Denmark, Great Britain (for discussion of Latvians in Great Britain, see Kaprāns, Chap. 6, this volume), Ireland, Austria, Australia and the Netherlands. The shortest period spent abroad was half a year and the longest was 11 years. However, most participants had emigrated from Latvia 4–5 years ago. All interviews were recorded and transcribed, and the transcripts were open-coded to identify the dominant themes, interpretations and experiences with regard to the operation of migrant networks and identity communication. All names of interviewees were substituted with pseudonyms.

We also used data from *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey, which was conducted in 2014 involving 14,068 Latvians living in 118 countries. For details on survey methodology see Mieriņa, Chap. 2, in this volume. Data were weighted by the respondents' host country, age, gender, language and education level so that the results better represent the general population of the Latvian diaspora. The number of responses (n = 4966) from the survey's quantitative data analysed in this chapter



is lower than that in other chapter of this volume ( $n = 14,068$ ). That is because respondents were given the chance to opt out of answering questions about a number of topics, including social media use, which many did.

An additional source of data was observations of social interaction in the most popular Latvian migrant groups on Facebook and Draugiem.lv. These observations took place at the same time as the interviewee recruitment process and provided a more detailed perspective on the communication dynamics in these groups and the most common themes of discussion among participants. Researchers joined the popular groups for Latvian migrants and, for about a month, followed the discussions among the participants and in an unstructured manner registered the themes of conversation and interactional practices, including tone and contents of replies.

The thematic pages and groups are important group communication features on social networking sites – they enable bulletin board-like features. In them, users associate based on a certain topic or theme, for example hobbies, lifestyles or interests. Participants in groups can post their entries or questions about an issue they find important and other users can answer them. In the context of this research project, of particular relevance are groups established and used by Latvian migrants, usually sharing a host country, city or region. These groups thus unite Latvians living in a certain place outside Latvia.

The underlying principles of pages are quite similar, with the exception that the only people who can post on these pages are those approved by an administrator. While groups can be public or closed, pages are always public. To join a closed group, a user also has to be accepted by an administrator. In general, groups usually encourage participants to publish their own posts, but the pages in most cases are established to attract followers and spread information about a certain topic (Facebook 2015).

The social interaction that takes place in these groups – and to a lesser extent on pages – provides important insight into the manifestations of migrant transnational and ethnic identities. There Latvian migrants can exchange information they find relevant, discuss topical issues and share and assert their views. Additionally they can identify compatriots who live nearby and possibly establish acquaintances, either online or offline.

A large number of Latvia-related groups and pages exist on Facebook and Draugiem.lv. More than 430 individual groups or pages have each attracted at least 100 participants or followers. Latvian migrant groups on Draugiem.lv with the largest membership are Anglija • England (32,837 members, as of October 2016), Latvieši Anglijā un Īrijā (*Latvians in England and Ireland*; 11,439 members), and Latvieši Norvēģijā (*Latvians in Norway*; 10,700 members). Among the most popular Facebook groups for Latvians who live abroad are Latvians Worldwide – Latvieši pasaulē: The Embassy of Latvians on Facebook (10,409 members), Latvieši UK (*Latvians in the UK*; 9908 members) and Latvieši Anglijā (*Latvians in England*; 6015 members). Overall, the most popular countries to which such groups are dedicated include Great Britain, Ireland, Norway and Denmark. This corresponds roughly to the list of countries with the largest Latvian communities, formed during waves of migration since the turn of the twenty-first century (Hazans 2011; Hazans and Philips 2010).

## 11.4 The Media Diet of Latvian Migrants

To answer the first research question, ‘Which media do Latvian migrants use and which of these are the most popular?’ it is important to review information and interaction channels and personal media used by Latvian migrants regularly. In this section we provide an overview of the media diet of Latvian migrants, with the aim of identifying the most popular ones and establishing the specifics of these media with respect to migrant communication.

It is to be expected that online media use is high among Latvian migrants as 77% of the Latvian population use the Internet at least once a week (Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia 2016). Of them, 87% use Draugiem.lv (about 49% do so on a daily basis) a site predominantly frequented by Latvian-speakers, but with functions and principles similar to those of Facebook. 77% use Facebook (48% on a daily basis) (Aptauja.lv 2014). Since the Latvian population is about two million, this means that in 2014, around 702,000 people were regular Draugiem.lv users and 688,000 used Facebook. According to data provided by Draugiem.lv, 715,000 unique users logged into the site during June 2014. Of them 85% were from Latvia, 6% from Britain and 1% were from each of these countries: Ireland, Germany, Sweden, Norway and the United States (Buholcs 2014). The geography of Draugiem.lv use encompasses many other countries, but the number of visitors from them is low.

Respondents to the survey were asked to report whether they used any of the listed social networking sites ‘regularly,’ ‘seldom,’ or ‘never.’ The results confirm that social networking sites make up a significant part of the daily communication activities of migrants, and most use at least one such platform (see Table 11.1) The most popular is Facebook, which is used by 82% of respondents, and 68% say that

**Table 11.1** The use of social networking sites among the Latvian diaspora (n = 4966)

Online service	Total users, %	Ethnic Latvians, %	Ethnic Russians, %	Other nationalities, %
<b>Use at all</b>				
Draugiem.lv	60	80	28	47
Facebook	82	83	83	83
Skype	91	89	93	91
Twitter	23	26	19	20
Vkontakte	21	11	40	25
Online mailing lists/blogs/ online groups	26	34	14	19
<b>Use on a regular basis</b>				
Draugiem.lv	37	55	6	19
Facebook	68	69	69	68
Skype	68	63	76	74
Twitter	8	10	5	4
Vkontakte	12	6	23	12

Source: The author, based on *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey

they use it regularly. The second most popular site is Draugiem.lv, which is used by 60% of the respondents and 37% of Latvian migrants use it regularly. However, since Draugiem.lv is predominantly a communication platform for the Latvian-speaking population, we broke down these results with respect to ethnic groups.

Among ethnic Latvians, both Facebook and Draugiem.lv are popular, with 83% using Facebook and 80% Draugiem.lv. 69% say that they use Facebook regularly while 55% regularly go to Draugiem.lv. Among ethnic Russians from Latvia who participated in the survey, Facebook is also the top choice: 83% say they use it and 69% are regular users. At the same time a considerable number of them – 40% – also use Vkontakte, and 23% use it regularly. Similar to Facebook, this general use social networking site is widely used in Russia and among Russian-speaking people in other countries, but it is not preferred by Latvian-speaking members of the Latvian diaspora.

The data suggest a considerable overlap in the use of the most popular social networking sites, which means that many migrants use more than one such site. 69% of the regular Draugiem.lv users and 72% of the regular Vkontakte users say that they also use Facebook. Moreover, 38% of the regular Facebook users also are on Draugiem.lv. 48% of the Latvian migrants say that they regularly use only one social networking site, 34% regularly use at least two, but 18% do not use any at all.

According to the survey data in this study, 26% of respondents take part in online groups, subscribe to mailing lists or maintain blogs. These activities are considerably more popular among ethnic Latvians than Russians: 34% and 14% respectively. Thus, participation on social networking site groups and pages may be related to migrant ethnicity. This supposition is consistent with our observations in social networking site groups used by Latvian migrants, which demonstrated that ethnic Latvians are much more active than ethnic Russians in joining diaspora groups based on a shared affiliation with Latvia.

Table 11.1 shows, that Skype is also a popular means of communication among Latvian migrants. It is used by 91% of the respondents, and 68% use it regularly. During interviews, participants mentioned also making phone calls and, less frequently, using mobile phone apps such as WhatsApp and Viber. Clearly, social networking sites have a special significance in identity communication and negotiation among Latvian migrants, fulfilling functions that other personal media do not provide in this regard.

The chat, voice-over-IP and video call service Skype differs fundamentally in its functionality from social networking sites, especially as in most cases Skype is used to maintain contacts between individuals that already exists. Many people use Skype to talk with people they know personally. The use of social networking sites, on the other hand, is considerably more diverse. In addition to following the activities of familiar people and friends, users can employ these sites to find relevant information sources, join thematic groups, identify people with shared interests and establish online or offline contacts with them. Importantly, they can engage in activities that facilitate interaction with people outside the user's immediate social network.

The diversity of one's media diet is explained by the media multiplexity principle, according to which those individuals who are connected with strong ties not only communicate with each other more intensively but also use more varied media (Haythornthwaite 2005). According to the responses of interviewees, the choice of a particular medium in each situation is determined by its ease of use and features. In this regard, migrants and other people who maintain long distance relationships appreciate that Skype allows conversation partners to see each other, provided their computers are equipped with a camera. An additional factor of the choice of media is the ability for all interaction partners to access the particular medium and the knowledge of all involved as to how to use it. For example, a number of migrants reach their older relatives by phone calls or even letters through the regular mail, because many among the older generation do not use computers. Another determining aspect is cost. If, for example, phone calls are expensive, then people will look for cheaper alternatives.

Social networking sites have a prominent role among Latvian migrants themselves. Their widespread adoption is promoted by the availability of internet and communication devices, as well as the distinctive features of such sites, which facilitate establishing contacts among people who did not know each other before but share ethnic or national belonging and an interest in fellow compatriots. Social networking sites thus provide spaces for interactions among migrants that fulfil the functions of public forums. There they can form or extend their local diaspora communities, share information and express and negotiate their identities. One-to-one communication tools such as Skype, email and telephone are less suitable for such modes of communication.

## 11.5 Media Content as a Tie to Latvia for Migrants

One type of communication media cannot be discussed in isolation from another, as all types of media, including mass media, make up the information and communication diet for migrants. Thus, in this section, we explore how the use of different media, including mass media and social networking sites, contributes to the preservation of links with Latvia in general and friends, relatives and acquaintances in particular. This allows us to answer the second research question, 'How are media, including social networking sites, being employed to maintain migrant transnational networks and express the migrants' sense of belonging to the Latvian community?'

The interest of respondents in mass media content is uneven. According to *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey, 63% of respondents regularly follow events in their host country, but the interview results show that interest in local social-political processes through mass media is quite limited. In these cases, they access information from local media sporadically or by accident. Lilita, who is 28 and lives in Great Britain, is one such person:

I do not follow [the British] media much, only occasionally. [...] I may read a newspaper distributed in an Underground station. If it is free, I grab it. I also sometimes watch the news on TV, about once a week or so. But many things are posted by my friends on Facebook.

Regarding the Latvian mass media, the situation is different. Interview results suggest that following Latvian media – usually by watching television channels online and visiting news sites – makes up most of the participants' overall mass media consumption. Most of the interviewees have a considerable interest in what is happening in Latvia. This interest in many cases is closely related to the lives of their friends and relatives, although they also want to maintain links with Latvia in general. Information that Latvian migrants get through transnational information flows may also influence their possible decision to return to Latvia, as seen in the experiences of Augusts, who is 31 and lives in Norway, and Knuts, who is 34 and resides in Germany.

Augusts: Well, I need this connection. I have to know what is going on there [in Latvia], because my parents, my relatives live there. I want to know about the environment they live in.

Knuts: When I speak with Latvians in Latvia, often it goes like this: I ask how they are doing and so on and what if I returned to Latvia, but very often they're like: 'You'd better stay in Germany, because there are no prospects in Latvia'... Those who live in Latvia seem to think that we are so much better off here than they are in Latvia.

This interest in current events in Latvia is not only instrumental, which means a process of acquiring information that can be useful in future, but it is also one of the ways that migrants maintain an emotional connection with their native country. While the interviewees stress that they read Latvian news and follow links shared by their compatriots because they want to remain knowledgeable about the events in their country of origin, their motivation also seems to be a need to assert their affiliation with Latvia or the Latvian community, and simultaneously to satisfy their human interest about them. Migrants read the news not just for the factual reports but because of their own subjective associations or according to self-selected preferences, so they can receive particular kinds of news about Latvia.

This process is explained by Silva, who is 27 and lives in Denmark and Laimdota, who is 29 and resides in Australia.

Silva: I read [the news] if something good has happened. [...] I try not to get into politics. I follow the headlines, but mostly that's about it. [...] No news. I don't like the news.

Laimdota: I am interested in seeing some positive developments and not that the IRS has come up with a gibberish plan about how they're gonna rake in more tax cash. Such news kills my desire to return to Latvia someday. As I told my Mum, after reading that piece about taxes on [the online news site] Delfi, my potential plans to return were pushed back for another six months.

Consumption of mass media has previously been associated with higher levels of integration, and Reis (2010) has found links between the migrants' own ethnic media consumption and more successful cultural adaptation. However, while researchers have noted the diversity of Latvian diaspora media (Lulle et al. 2015),

these do not seem to be very popular. None of the interviewees said they followed ethnic media issued in their host countries.

Sometimes not following the media, or doing so sporadically, stems from the interviewees' overall lack of interest in socio-political matters. In these cases, some of the functions fulfilled by the media are substituted with regular exchanges with friends and relatives in Latvia and compatriots in the host country, and discussions in social networking site groups. The content and themes in these groups focus mostly on practical issues and, to a lesser extent, organising social events. Arguably, this demonstrates the needs and interests of a certain section of the Latvian migrants. This will be discussed in detail in the next section.

Interviewees note that social networking sites provide a convenient, casual, non-binding and resource-effective way of keeping in touch with people who are familiar but with whom they do not actively communicate. In this case the interpersonal contacts are maintained by following and reacting to the information that is shared by others online. In addition to such communicative activities as exchanging letters or having phone conversations that require considerable determination and motivation, people can maintain connection with members of their social network by commenting on other peoples' entries, 'liking' and sharing their posts. At the same time, social networking sites also provide opportunities for richer communication with close friends and relatives. These practices are illustrated by Sandra, who is 22 and lives in Norway, and Lilita, who is 28 and resides in Great Britain.

Sandra: I try at least once or twice, or three times per month to write to them, 'Hi, what's up?' so that my link with those who remain in Latvia doesn't disappear. I've got some good friends there. [...] Usually I send them a message on Facebook and Draugiem.lv, or, if they have WhatsApp, then I use that.

Lilita: I keep in touch with my acquaintances through Facebook. These people can be divided in two groups: those to whom I write direct messages and those whose posts I 'like' and leave comments on.

This diversity of the available kinds of online interaction, characterised by the lower transaction costs of social media (Ellison et al. 2011), allows users to maintain larger networks of interpersonal connections. The ease of connecting and following various sources of information increases the willingness of migrants to establish or activate ties with others, including their compatriots, and to exchange information and other kinds of support.

Moreover, the presence of Latvia-related content on the timelines of migrants' social networking site accounts can itself serve as a form of connection to users who have shared the information about Latvia in general. The next section describes the experiences of Latvian migrants in maintaining their connections to Latvia through online ties.

## 11.6 Transnational Communication on Social Networking Sites: Us and Them

Having examined how both mass media and social networking sites allow migrants to maintain their ties with fellow Latvians and remain in the Latvian information sphere, we turn specifically to analysis of the use of social networking sites. This is the users' interaction with a wider, personally unacquainted public that takes place through interaction in groups and on pages within social networking sites. This process fundamentally influences the dynamic of the ties within the Latvian diaspora and sets social networking sites apart from the other types of personal media that migrants use.

It is hard to isolate the role of social networking sites in the complex flow of transnational information, which is why we are discussing the use of these communication platforms in the context of the general media diet of Latvian migrants. However, they are clearly significant channels through which considerable interaction between diaspora members takes place, since these sites are so closely incorporated into the everyday practices of gathering information and communicating used by most of the participants.

Besides their other activities, users can make use of the interactive features of these sites and share links to publications from other media. In this way, they can influence the kind of information being circulated among compatriots who live in different countries. Laimdota, who is 29 and lives in Australia, characterised the significance of social networking sites in this way:

These social networks filter what is important from what is not. They show what the majority is interested in, what is important for the majority, and what [is important] for those who have moved here. In this way, they [the social media] approve or reject an opinion that a migrant may have developed about what is going on Latvia.

The ability to maintain regular, even constant contact through social networking sites and the mutual interaction possible through its audio-visual features (that is, the ability to see and hear each other and to follow the changes in people and places through time), can serve to strengthen emotional ties and reduce subjective perceptions of geographical distance. Komito (2011) has claimed that passive monitoring of posts published by other compatriots on social media reminds users of the presence of others regardless of the physical distance of their separation and promotes the sense of belonging to their ethnic community, and this might discourage them from developing contacts with the host society. However, such a perception of the closeness of compatriots is not necessarily associated with the unwillingness or inability to integrate. For example, Laimdota is married to an Australian-born citizen; her husband has Latvian ancestry but does not speak Latvian. She explains how the stream of mostly online-based information from Latvia keeps her open to the idea of a return to Latvia:



Those in Latvia are telling others what is happening there, how the social life is developing. [Through these updates] I see that many sorts of cafes have appeared in Rīga. There are now many new things to do: it wasn't like that when we left Latvia. Sometimes I'm sitting here at home watching it ... and I want to go back.

This form of maintaining connections does have limitations, though. Despite the fact that migrants have a wide range of media and diverse information sources at their disposal, this plurality itself does not completely compensate for their lack of direct, first-hand experience of events in Latvia. The interviewees acknowledge that since they left, it has become harder for them to understand the political and social issues in Latvia in detail. Ance, who is 28 and lives in Ireland and Laimdota, from Australia, describe this as follows:

Ance: When I had just moved to Ireland, I was very motivated to know what was going on in Latvia. But now I find it very difficult to be interested in the politics of one country, when you live in a completely different one. And also you don't have enough time for that, and so the interest gradually fades.

Laimdota: I do not really follow [Latvian] politics any longer. I cannot follow it anymore, because I don't understand what is going on there. (*laughs.*) But I am still interested in what people are doing there. For instance I like Dienas Bizness [the Latvian daily business newspaper and website], which shows me that something is indeed happening; that people are doing business and are being recognised internationally.

This effect of alienation through distance is even more pronounced if emigrants have faced hostile views about emigration and life in a different country. A number of interviewees, including Silva, 27, who lives in Denmark, and Daina, who is 44 and resides in Great Britain, shared such experiences:

Silva: When I go to visit Latvia, they point fingers at me, because everyone has read [in the media] just how terrible we [the emigrants] are. [...] It's almost like I should feel guilty just for living in another country. Then I must explain to them that it's not me, not me. I only met my husband [while I was abroad].

Daina: Sometimes it seems to me that perhaps at one point an awful split has happened. We are on one side, and the people who stayed in Latvia are on the other. And then there is communication... Say, an article about emigration gets published in Latvia, and then you read the online comments and see how negative they are. It seems that it's never going to be good enough for both sides, and we don't know how to communicate: those of us who live here, and those who live there. Many people who live in Latvia and haven't worked abroad are discussing things they don't understand at all.

Another dimension of the articulation of national identity is demonstrated by these clashes of ideological and moral positions and differing interpretations of emigration and, by extension, views of what a 'decent Latvian' should and should not do. A considerable number of people who live in Latvia display critical attitudes towards emigrants. In the Latvian public discourse references exist to emigrants as people who are self-interested or misguided – even 'traitors' (Lulle 2007).

Latvian migrants, naturally, do not see themselves as traitors, and stress that those who criticise them are ignorant of the different motivations and choices they have made. Most of the interviewees nevertheless perceive themselves as Latvians – at least partly – and this rift illustrates a key characteristic of the distinct national



identity of Latvian migrants. Rather than being tied to Latvian geographical territory, they emphasize the maintenance of informational and emotional links to their home country, its people and culture.

The experiences of migrants also reminds us that the availability of information channels and the diversity of information does not in itself lead to increased concord. Although online interpersonal media are indeed important in keeping in touch, the principle of homophily must be taken into account when explaining the formation and functioning of social networks. According to this principle, individuals establish and maintain ties based on similarities, and thus social networks tend to be homogenous. In other words, people attract those who have similar demography, background, behaviour or other characteristics (McPherson et al. 2001). However, the availability and effectiveness of the media employed is only one of a variety of elements that influence communication, conflict and mutual understanding among people. If people are able to contact each other and talk, it does not necessarily mean that they will – or that they will be willing to reconsider their own views in the light of new information.

## 11.7 Migrant Identities on Social Networking Sites

The third research question deals with the manifestation and contestation of the identities of Latvian migrants in online discussion spaces, which they have established on social networking sites.

As demonstrated earlier, most of the interviewees keep in close contact with Latvia and with people living there. Latvia – mostly in the sense of the land and culture, rather than the state (Ķešāne 2011) – constitutes a crucial part of their identity, and while living abroad, their interest in other Latvians and their willingness to establish or maintain ties with them is promoted by shared ethnic or national belonging. Consequently, their use of social networking sites is related to their expression of ethnic and transnational identities.

An important factor to consider is the heterogeneity of the membership of the online group. The interviewees in our sample illustrated this diversity. They differed in their professions and jobs, their education and the ties they have developed with people from the host society. Some of them are surrounded by other Latvians or people from other Central and Eastern European countries on a daily basis, while others work in international companies or alongside 'locals' – or have established a family with a partner from the host country. These backgrounds contribute to the diversity of the identity behaviours and opinions that can be observed in these online groups. Correspondingly, the self-identification and the level of association with other Latvians differ greatly among participants. Some of the interviewees imply that the reason they follow the activities of other compatriots on social networking sites, including in groups and on pages, is to follow the events and topicalities in the local Latvian community so that they can be 'informed' and 'connected.' Others say explicitly that they do so to assert their national belonging.

Thus, for some, these online activities satisfy general interest. Participants enjoy following groups, pages and profiles because they see that activity as a way to interact with or – passively and resource-efficiently – to follow other people, regardless of whether they are familiar or not. Information published there allows them to look into other peoples' lives and socialise based on that. Sarma, who is 57 and lives in Ireland and Nauris, 44, who resides in Norway, described their motivations in using this information.

Sarma: I just read how everybody is doing in the world. [...] What do I get from that? Information, I guess. Information and entertainment.

Nauris: On Draugiem.lv, I have only two kinds of activities; either direct communication through private messages or goofing around in the site's groups. [...] When a topic appears about which people have things to say, like from the heart and soul, I jump right into it. Or sometimes into nonsense.

Ance, who is 28 and lives in Ireland, explained that she does not use the online group to search for particular information or solve various issues. Her purpose in registering in the group for Latvians in Ireland was to 'declare that I am a Latvian in Ireland – that I actually am somewhere.' Knuts, who is 34 and lives in Germany, stressed that it is important for him to be informed about local cultural events and also visits by Latvian officials to his host country, even though they usually take place too far from his home and he is unable to participate or witness them in person.

Somewhat similarly, Daina, who is 44 and lives in Great Britain, said: 'I am an educated person after all. I have to know what is happening in Latvia and in the world, and also what the topicalities here are: for example, the changes in the local legislation that affects us.' She highlighted both instrumental and emotional aspects, while adding that she follows information in Latvian migrant online groups and elsewhere and considers it important. The reason, she said, was that 'I am one of them.'

The articulation of national affiliation and expressions of attitudes are not tied exclusively to online communication, of course. However, they are expressed in this way as part of the social interaction of Latvian migrants on social networking sites.

Such manifestations of identity and the meanings attached to them can best be observed when participants in a group defend a certain moral position or decision on the grounds of national or ethnic self-image. People like Sarma, who is 57 and lives in Ireland, and Silva, 27, who lives in Denmark, turned against the morally or legally questionable actions of their compatriots because they believe that such actions have a negative impact on how Latvians as a community are perceived in the host country.

Sarma: We had a terrible fight in the group recently... Some of the participants believe that the local social security system should be abused as much as possible. But others, myself included, think that it is shameful if Latvians do things like that, and also [shameful] that people are not looking for a job for more than five years, ten years even. They just cash in benefits from the state and have no intention of changing anything about it.

Silva: Sometimes quarrels start about whether or not taxes should be paid, or whether to live from unofficial income or not. From these fights you can see who has just moved here and who doesn't have the Danish mentality yet [...]. On the other side of the line, there are people like me who have lived here for years and who know that such behaviour can't last.

These online and offline incidents may be interpreted as illustrations of the 'dual lives' many transnational migrants live (Portes 1997), supplemented by their individual opinions as to how they and their fellow Latvians should resolve this duality. For some of them, it involves adopting what they perceive as the honourable traits (the 'mentality') of the local population and opposing behaviour that clashes with them. For others, it involves treating their host country as a practical resource, as opposed to having an emotional attachment to it (Gustafson 2005; also see Koroļeva, Chap. 4, this volume). The extent to which a migrant accepts the local customs and expects others to do the same also becomes a contested identity issue.

These positions echo what some interviewees said about their unwillingness to reveal in offline settings that they are Latvians, because they experienced unpleasant situations when 'down and outs' of Latvian origin have recognised them and attempted to start a conversation. Interviewees who shared such stories explained that they have felt ashamed by encounters with those whose lifestyles and behaviour did not meet the standard at which they wish Latvians were perceived in their host country. Conflicts about whether Latvians should have a certain level of manners and good behaviour demonstrate how the subjective concept of 'being Latvian' is expressed in various environments.

Even though some manifestations of identity may meet resistance in others, ethnic or transnational affiliation does involve interest in compatriots and a general willingness to associate with them – at least in online-based format, which gives them more control over the extent to which they are exposed to other compatriots. In this regard, social networking sites may serve not just as sources of information for many migrants, or as a platform on which interpersonal exchanges with fellow Latvians becomes possible, but also as a cultural space in which they can express sentiments and define their positions against the statements from others.

## **11.8 Themes Discussed in Social Networking Site Groups as Markers of the Affiliation**

Groups for migrants on social networking sites serve as forums or bulletin boards. The themes discussed in these groups and the ways in which interviewees describe social interactions that take place there can be interpreted both as manifestations of the identity of participants and conditions that have to be accepted in order to gain or assert membership in any of the groups for Latvians.

Interaction in social networking groups for Latvian migrants online allows them to solve various, mostly practical issues; for example, where to find a place to work

or live, how to buy and sell things, where to find providers of various services, how to complete paperwork correctly, and so on. Shared national or ethnic ties provide the necessary solidarity and trust that enable such transactions among people, many of whom do not know each other personally.

Explicitly political discussions are not frequent in these groups and on these pages. This observation refers especially to Draugiem.lv, which is used mostly by people living in Latvia and those who have left Latvia during the past couple of decades. On Facebook, Latvians who emigrated during World War II and their descendants also join similar groups. These users are more eager to discuss political themes related to Latvia and are not devoted to issues encountered by the recent emigrants. The migration experiences and topicalities of the recent emigrants are different, and their use of social networking sites is hard to compare. Because of these difficulties of comparison, this paper does not cover these older Latvian migrant communities.

The presence of people from earlier migration waves from Latvia is one reason why diaspora communication on Facebook tends to include social, cultural and possibly political themes. Additionally, Facebook is more popular than Draugiem.lv among representatives of various diaspora organisations, which include Latvian societies, choirs and social event organisers. However, pages and groups maintained by such organisations serve mostly for information purposes rather than as forums for discussion, and occasions when recent Latvian migrants set up discussion spaces for political exchanges are rare.

The dominance of mundane, practical issues is explained by the fact that these are related to some of the migrants' basic needs. However, if these needs are met it does not mean that an individual will move on to formulate and achieve more abstract and political objectives. Augusts, who is 31 and lives in Norway, was quite critical towards the qualities of other local Latvians and gave a general description of the participants in one online group as follows:

Well, there are people who are oriented towards some kind of personal development, and then there are those whose interests will always remain at the same level. For example, the interests of building workers will never rise above how to avoid the television tax and where to get cheap smokes.

When participants in these groups have settled in their host country and become acquainted with the prevailing arrangements there, they either start helping others and/or simply follow the discussions – or lose interest in the activities of Latvian migrant groups altogether. Others may also set up new groups on specific themes or activities their compatriots may be interested in; for example, groups that promote face-to-face contacts among fellow Latvians.

One of the interviewees manages a Facebook group called 'Latvian Parties in Oslo,' which connects people who come together regularly for social events. Other groups or pages mentioned during the interviews were book clubs, knitting circles, choirs, etc. Such groups – both those that focus on practical issues and those formed to promote offline social activities among Latvians – unite differing people, including those of varying views and lifestyles. Even though these groups are based on

shared ethnicity or nationality and in some cases serve as manifestations of these ethnic or national ties, it does not necessarily mean that participants have similar ideas about what being 'a Latvian' means.

Although participants in these groups do not touch on political themes frequently, national identity itself is intrinsically political, and a migrant's sense of belonging to Latvia is still one of the elements that facilitates social interaction among them. Some instances of explicitly political discussions do occur occasionally. Participants mentioned such topics as the Latvian parliamentary elections, the war in Ukraine, the 2012 referendum on introducing Russian as a second official language in Latvia and the Latvian government's *Return migration support action plan 2013–2016*. However, more often than not participants in these groups are not motivated to express their views about these or other similar themes. The issue has to be of exceptional significance to prompt them to discuss it. Alise, 28, who lives in Norway, and Knuts, 34, who resides in Germany describe the general attitude in migrant groups towards political discussions as follows:

Alise: I don't know how many people are actually interested in elections if you do not live in Latvia. OK, when the referendum regarding Russian as the official language was about to be held, everybody was interested in that because everybody was against granting such status to the Russian language. But if this is just another regular election, I don't know how many will pay attention to it.

Knuts: It seems that few members are active [with respect to political themes]. Interest in Russia's latest [international, political] activities is not very high, either. Maybe some users share some articles from news sites about that. Occasionally a discussion that's a bit harsher than usual may start here and there. But in general, I think that on such issues they [the participants] are more like passive observers.

However, only a few interviewees said that they are keen to express opinions about politics and other arguably more sophisticated themes on Facebook or Draugiem.lv. Few could recall examples of online discussions about a migration-related political issue in their host country.

Such indifference to politics can be partially explained by the general lack of interest in mass media that is a characteristic among a significant percentage of the interviewees. As highlighted previously, many migrants do follow Latvian media, but at the same time, they have a relatively passive attitude towards what is being reported. In other cases, they may have a genuine interest in political and social developments in Latvia and elsewhere but prefer not to discuss their views publicly. Thus, these migrants satisfy their need for information by simply following media content and possibly talking about it with friends and relatives. They do not feel the need for discussions in social networking site groups. Some of the interviewees, for example, Eduards, who is 35 and lives in Germany, and Krista, 28, who resides in the Netherlands, went so far as to say that political discussions were divisive, and thus do not suit the groups. They did not feel that such discussions serve the purposes of the migrant online groups well.

Eduards: This topic [politics] shouldn't be discussed there. Politics, along with religion, is taboo. Everyone has a different opinion about that, and I don't think this should be posted there at all. Otherwise it's like imposing something on others.

Krista: I avoid discussing 'big' issues. Ukraine is a no-go, and so is Russia. Too many Russians are on Facebook, so it's too risky. [...] I think it's better not [to discuss it]. I avoid these topics when talking with Russians, because I want to stay friends with them. And I know that their views will not change anyway.

Those interviewees who were open to discussion of socio-political topics stood out because they demonstrate a higher level of social activism than the rest. For example, they may be active in charitable organisations or write a blog about Latvian cooking traditions with the aim of sharing this information with people interested in Latvian cultural heritage.

## 11.9 Hybrid Identities

While Latvian migrants maintain close ties with people from their native country, about two-thirds of survey respondents say that they also have friends among the local population, and about 50% say that they have three or more such friends. This suggests that Latvians integrate in the host country quite well (Mieriņa and Koroļeva 2015). Thus, they maintain multiple national bonds, which are experienced variously in terms of their significance to their wellbeing and emotional attachment to a country (Lulle 2011).

The interview results illustrate in detail that an emigrant can feel integrated into the host society and identify primarily with it rather than with Latvia. However, they can still reject some aspects of the society they live in and choose Latvian 'alternatives' instead. Such situations arise because migrants have to balance between identities associated with different countries. By doing this, they combine, apply and re-interpret elements associated with these multiple identities. The concept of migrant hybrid identities (Brinkerhoff 2009) explains this phenomenon.

Among the interviewees were Latvians who have purposely restricted their face-to-face contact with the local Latvian community. They may have some Latvian friends but in general, their interest in the activities of the local Latvian community is limited. The reasons for such decisions can be either their critical views of Latvians as a group and their perceived unflattering traits, or because such migrants maintain that limiting contacts with Latvians and strengthening their ties with the locals improves their personal development opportunities in the host country. Nauris, who is 44 and lives in Norway, says:

My wife and I are trying to limit our hanging out with other Latvians. [...] Because of all that Latvian envy, malevolence and all that. [...] They [Latvians] mostly stay in their own environment, but that hinders growth. If one develops contacts with the locals that opens up new opportunities, new acquaintances.

At the same time people with such views, regardless of their criticism of compatriots, are active in social networking site groups for Latvian migrants. Some pro-

vide advice and other kinds of informational support to other group participants, and they also follow events in Latvia. Thus, they are combining their everyday lives in the company of local people with online interaction with Latvians – but on their own terms.

A vivid example of the development of hybrid identities is the experience of Silva, who is 27 and lives in Denmark. During the interview, she claimed that 'currently, I feel more like a Dane than a Latvian' and that she has accepted 'the Danish mentality.' At the same time, while expecting a child, she visits online discussion boards for Latvian mothers. Despite identifying with the Danish culture, she stresses: 'Regarding child upbringing, I am very Latvian. Denmark is very feminist in this. Our views don't match.'

Contemporary individuals can adapt a variety of social roles and switch between differing relationship networks (Wellman 2002). This allows individuals, including migrants, to develop and maintain multi-faceted identities and enables the co-existence of different, seemingly conflicting identity markers ('a Latvian'; 'a Dane'). Interview results and observations in social networking site groups demonstrate that these sites and other information sources and social interaction platforms increase the flexibility of identification options available to migrants and also provide them with places for experiments and feedback.

## 11.10 Conclusions

Social networking sites are closely incorporated into migrants' everyday communication practices. According to our data, most of the people who have emigrated from Latvia during the latest wave of migration use at least one such site. Along with the migrants' consumption of mass media, their visits to the homeland and the remittances and goods they send home, the use of social networking sites can be added to the set of transnational practices (Christiansen 2004).

The social networking sites have a twofold function. Firstly, along with phone calls, Skype, email and other interpersonal communication media they are used to maintain contacts with relatives, friends and acquaintances, both in Latvia and other countries. The ability to follow other peoples' lives without much effort, which includes commenting on posts, browsing photo galleries and engaging in phatic exchanges (Malinowski 1923) – for example, asking 'How are you?' – reduces the detrimental effect that long physical distances have on interpersonal relationships.

Secondly, thematic pages and groups devoted to Latvians living in different countries or cities promote interaction between people who share national or ethnic affiliation but are not known to each other before. Relationships based on such traits facilitate access to information, allow Latvians to find others living nearby and encourage a willingness to widen one's social networks. These groups are successful in serving as communities for support and self-help.

Participation in these groups is also important in the manifestation, assertion and negotiation of transnational and ethnic identities. The development of identity is a



communicative process and, as pointed out by Handler (1994), the very act of talking about 'who we are' influences identity. Thus, by communicating one's identity, that identity is being constructed simultaneously. In this regard, the communication of Latvian migrants on social networking sites promotes these identity processes by enabling and facilitating contacts among the compatriots – and, of course, other people – providing a space where users can express themselves and negotiate access to information they want.

A core element of these transnational communication flows between Latvians living in different countries is information that is being exchanged about Latvia, including facts, interpretations and attitudes. The Latvian migrants interviewed often said that one of the basic motivations for them to follow events and topics related to Latvia in the mass media, on social networking sites and in groups is to maintain and assert ties with their country of origin. It is important for them not only because they do not rule out entirely the possibility of returning to their homeland but also because this allows them to strengthen their sense of belonging to Latvia. However, most of them are not considering relocation in the foreseeable future, and at this point willingness to maintain ties with Latvia particularly highlights the aspect of emotional rather than instrumental associations regarding their ties to their homeland.

The migrants' perceptions of events in Latvia are affected by a variety of information sources. These include information that is picked up and shared by users of social networking sites, reported by Latvian online news media and discussed in their comments sections and also through direct communication with friends and relatives in Latvia and elsewhere. These information flows are not shaped by a single medium or communication platform. At the same time, the prominent place that social networking sites occupy in the media and the communication diet of migrants confirms that interpersonal relationship networks that are maintained and developed through such means are one of the elements that facilitate interaction among migrants, which also includes the development and maintenance of their shared identities (Georgiou 2006). However, under such conditions, these identities can both converge and diverge.

Ascribing normative characteristics and values to the community of Latvian migrants, some members of the online groups deplore certain behaviour traits or condemn the actions of certain individuals because they do not comply with the moral qualities they feel that 'a Latvian' should possess. In cases where this is not possible, they may try to disassociate themselves from Latvians whose behaviour and moral judgments differ radically from theirs.

These conceptions of being part of a community also manifest differing views among Latvians regarding which activities or attitudes can be discussed openly on a social networking site group, which are self-organised social spaces that exist without explicit supervision by the state authorities. These differences may lead to arguments and quarrels, which are one of the ways participants express and notice differing views and negotiate group norms. Additionally, differences of opinion on the issue of migration between those who have emigrated and people living in Latvia suggest the existence of differing perceptions of national identity. Migrants



represent an identity that can also be based on an imaginary space (Ghorashi 2004), while Latvians who criticise migrants for leaving the country are more likely to perceive the state of 'belonging to Latvia' as requiring someone to be physically present there.

The results of the present study are a reminder of the somewhat deceptive allure of 'community', a term overused through numerous and loose applications to both offline and online environments (Fernback 2007) and diaspora (Hage 2005). Latvian migrants who join online groups based on shared ethnicity or national belonging in order to exchange information and other kinds of support indeed invoke the sense of participation in communities. However, their actual attachment to these groups varies; as do their backgrounds, their attitudes towards other Latvians and their competing concepts of what 'being a Latvian' means. These variations illustrate the large differences among the members of such groups.

This provides one way of interpreting the concept of 'imagined communities' (Anderson 1991) in the context of transnational migration. As noted by Sökefeld (2006), the sense of being part of a community does not necessarily mean that the ideas of identity among community members are similar. However, the disputes about these ideas reaffirm the fact that the members of the group do believe in the existence of a shared identity that forms the basis of a community they call their own (Sökefeld 2006).

In their analysis of Latvian diaspora media, Lulle et al. (2015) observed the existence of a constructed idealised conception of Latvia as a united nation across borders. However, in practice, a 'unifying diaspora consciousness' does not exist. Diversity is an integral feature of a diaspora. In this regard, migrant interactions on social networking sites do not necessarily promote homogenisation of Latvian diaspora identities, or the development of these identities in a certain direction. Such online communication platforms do facilitate the exchange of information and the maintenance of contacts, but this does not mean that the abstract 'Latvian identity' that unites such different people would become more homogeneous because of the mere fact that communication takes place at this level. Instead, online and offline-based social circles in which migrants engage may increase the number of choices and identity elements available to migrants as they settle and integrate into their host country.

Ultimately, while participation in an online group for Latvian migrants may itself be an identity statement that does not change dramatically over short periods of time, the connection of participants to individual group members is much more ephemeral (Bucholtz 2018). As such, the manifestation and negotiation of transnational identities on social networking sites as a collective process is highly fragmented. While participation in online groups and the maintenance of connections with fellow compatriots allows the migrants to remain in the language and cultural space of their homeland, their actual benefit from this connection may vary greatly. Although there may be occasional clashes and differences of opinion about what constitutes Latvian identity, the general unwillingness of the participants to touch upon political issues in their discussions indicate that many of them recognise that such discussions or quarrels are not likely to lead to more unified or coherent views

among group members. Instead, they may be more willing to express their political and ideological views to people with which they have strong connections and ties, who are more likely to share and support these views.

In the context of this fragmentation, the emergence of hybrid identities (Brinkerhoff 2009) is a notable outcome of the wide range of online and offline-based opportunities that are at the disposal of migrants and which allow their diverse social networks to be combined. Some of the interviewees who feel integrated into their host societies still purposely maintain identity elements; namely, some customs and norms commonly found in Latvian society. In these cases, social networking sites are among the venues that serve as an instrument of articulation and appropriation of such identity elements. Additionally, the online social spaces provide communicative flexibility that allows users to maintain ties to Latvia and Latvians in various degrees. Some seek to extend their online and offline ties with compatriots while others may have reservations about the Latvian community, but are still willing to take part in groups for Latvian migrants online – they just do it on their own terms. For those who have limited their offline contacts with other Latvians living in their host country, this approach allows them to keep in touch with the Latvian community and to maintain the level of ties they prefer with their homeland.

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**Part III**  
**Return Migration and Policies of the**  
**Sending Country**

# Chapter 12

## Return Migration Process in Policy and Practice



Evija Kļave and Inese Šūpule

### 12.1 Introduction

The return process to Latvia after a life spent in emigration is not a theme that has been examined in Latvia much until recently within research into migration processes. The need to improve collaboration with the Latvian diaspora, as well as to encourage and support the return of Latvian emigrants to Latvia has become an issue in Latvian policy during the last 10 years. As noted by several authors, the state's position on return migration and diaspora policy depends on perceptions of emigration (Boccagni 2011; Delano and Gamlen 2015; Sinatti 2015). Latvian diaspora work unfolded at a time when political rhetoric shifted from talk of 'betrayal' or 'ignorance' to emphasise that the diaspora is a part of the Latvian cultural nation (Dzenovska 2015). Although discussions on return migration policy in Latvia date back to 2008, there is a shortage of studies evaluating return migration policy from the perspective of returnees in Latvia. At the same time, other countries have analysed their return migration processes and conducted studies addressing their policies and programmes for return migration with those they target.

Over the past 10 years one of the most influential return migration projects in Europe has been the Re-turn project. Involving seven European countries (Germany, Austria, Italy, Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovenia), it aimed to push the topic of return migration onto the political agenda in Central European regions. The project resulted in a number of publications (among them, Nadler et al. 2016) which added to the existing literature on return migration in various other parts of the world, which includes Boccagni (2011), Cassarino (2008), Sinatti (2015), and Tejada et al. (2016).

Return migration studies suggest that 'returning' should be viewed as a part of the migration cycle, in that the willingness to return relates to the reasons for

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emigration in the first place and the subsequent experiences of a migrant in the host country. Cassarino (2008) suggests a three-stage approach for analysing return migration and re-integration into the country of origin. Stage one covers the pre-emigration conditions; stage two looks at the migration experience and stage three analyses the migrant's conditions post-return.

A study of the return intentions of Latvian immigrants living abroad (Krisjane et al. 2016) has adopted this framework. Return migration is not viewed as the end of the migration sequence but rather as a precursor of circular migration (Cassarino 2004; Dustmann 2000; King 2012). It corresponds to observations that much contemporary migration is temporary (Dustmann et al. 2011; Engbersen and Snel 2013). However, one of the main trends revealed in the study is that respondents whose migration behaviour corresponded with circular migration are less inclined to return (Krisjane et al. 2016, p. 234).

Our study into the concept of return migration has been influenced by King (2000), whose definition of return migration is that it is 'the process whereby people return to their country of origin after a significant life period in another country'. Although we acknowledge that return migration may be embedded in a cyclical process of repeat migrations, in this study we focus on cases where return migration is perceived as permanent and that the returning migrants intend to live in Latvia permanently. We define 'return migrants' in our study as those who:

1. Have returned after living outside Latvia for at least 2 years;
2. Have lived in Latvia for a period of at least 2 years, and;
3. Consider their return permanent.

Bearing in mind the findings on return migration from other countries, this chapter describes return migration policy measures developed by Latvia's public authorities and evaluates these policies through the experiences and perspectives of return migrants. The article seeks to determine how, if at all, national policy has motivated emigrants from Latvia to return to their homeland and to identify which of the support measures offered are important to them. More specifically the main research questions of the chapter are:

1. What is 'return migration policy' in Latvia?
2. What is the response among Latvian migrants to this return migration policy?
3. What are the reasons for return for Latvian emigrants?
4. What theoretical models are manifested in the return migration of Latvian migrants?

To answer these questions, this article examines the main policy document of Latvian return migration, the *Return migration support action plan for 2013–2016*, to analyse the return policy-making process, the reasons for the initiation of this policy and its social and economic context.

Furthermore, based on the data from in-depth interviews with returnees, analysis will be conducted of their experiences of returning and their assessment of return migration support activities. The most significant reasons for return are outlined in



the following section, and return models identified in the theoretical literature in the context of stories by Latvian returnees are assessed in the conclusion.

Several models explaining the return processes common in the theoretical literature have been examined prior to the analysis of empirical data gathered in the research. It is important to note that all the models of return defined in the theoretical literature and examined in this article refer to situations where return is voluntary. There are cases of ‘forced return’ but this article does not examine them as its principal focus is on voluntary decisions to return to Latvia.

## 12.2 Theoretical Models of Return

Studies of migration processes that refer to a return to the country of origin started in the social sciences during the 1980s. There were some separate studies of return migration before that, but it wasn’t until the 1980s that studies of return migration were of a high enough academic standard to be included in debates alongside other academically scientific studies (Cassarino 2004).

One of the early theories that examined the phenomenon of return is neoclassical economics. It is based on the assumption that the main reasons for migration are the differences in the standard of living, including levels of salaries, in the host country and the country of origin. Here, the migrant is seen as a rational being that wishes to increase his income. Return migration is therefore examined as a failure of the planned migration, because the aim of getting a higher income has not been achieved (Todaro 1969).

Another course of economic theory – the new economics of labour migration or NELM – examines return migration as a part of the migration process and considers that in many cases a return is previously foreseen and planned; it is a calculated strategy. In a successful migration experience the individual obtains the planned financial or symbolic resources, like capital, savings, education, experience, knowledge or contacts and consequently returns to the country of origin (Stark 1991). Both economic theories mentioned are much criticised in the literature of social sciences because they ignore various important factors of context, both of the host country and the country of origin and do not deal with non-economic reasons of return migration. The dimension of success or failure is not the only one that is significant in making a decision about returning (Cassarino 2004, p. 4).

The approach of structuralism, when explaining the return process, attaches great importance to the factors of context in both the host country and the country of origin. A representative of this approach, Francesco Cerase (1974), distinguishes four different types of social factors influencing migrants to return home:

1. Return due to the failure to integrate. The decision to return is taken because the migrant has not succeeded in integrating into the society of the host country;
2. Conservative return. The planned objectives are achieved in the host country and so the migrant returns to his country of origin. However, his return does not

essentially change his situation within the social structure or cause innovations within society. The accrued resources are used for individual or family needs without an emphasis on development;

3. Return of pensioners. The elderly return to their country of origin with the aim of spending their old age in their native land;
4. Innovative return. These are migrants who return and are ready to use their accrued means and knowledge to start a new business or to implement other new plans in their country of origin.

It must be noted also that many authors acknowledge that the main motives for migrants returning to their country of origin are mostly non-economic. The main reasons for return are emotional. The most important among them are a sense of belonging to the places or country of origin, homesickness, or a return due to social bonds with relatives who have stayed in the native land. It is very rare that the economics of the country of origin develop so much that it offers an overall better standard of living than the host country (Markowitz and Stefansson 2004; Piotrowski and Tong 2010; Sussman 2010).

In an analysis of return processes, the planned duration and aims of the emigration are an essential feature. Gmelch (1980) identifies two basic features that are closely connected with the expectations of returnees before emigration: their planned duration in the host country and their reasons for return.

Gmelch (1980, p. 138) has established a typology of returnees, proposing three distinct types:

1. Returnees who planned a short migration and for whom return is connected to achieving emigration targets;
2. Returnees who planned a lasting and continuous migration but were forced to return due to external factors;
3. Returnees who planned a lasting and continuous migration but decided to return because they could not integrate into the host country or felt a strong bond with the country of origin.

Another theoretical course – the transnationalism approach – emphasises that a migrant's return to the country of origin does not necessarily mean the end of the migration cycle. Firstly, repeated migration is widespread nowadays. Secondly, 'back and forth migration' can be seen more and more often, related to the professional activities of the migrants and the regular and close cross-border contacts characteristic to it (Portes et al. 1999). Migrants maintain economic, social and political networks in several societies. The return of transnationals to their country of origin is greatly influenced by their identity and their attraction to their native land, to the lifestyle, or both. The return takes place when migrants have accrued sufficient resources – maybe financial, perhaps of human and social capital – and when the situation and context in the country of origin is favourable enough for maintaining mobility. In this model, a physical return to the native land does not mean that professional activities are also transferred. On the contrary, the migrant maintains regular and close cross-border contacts.

According to the theoretical framework on return migration policy-making, it has been stressed that in many countries return migration policy is initiated first in situations when emigration numbers increase significantly and the flow of human resources becomes a problem. The solving of this human resource problem requires the intervention of the state (Kacnarczyk and Lesinska 2012). Secondly, return migration is initiated in situations when the return of people to their country of origin is being considered as a solution to demographic problems or problems concerning the lack of a work force, and the country needs to motivate people to return. In this case, national policy may be made ‘active’ to stimulate and support the return flow – or ‘passive/reactive’ as a reaction to the consequences of emigration. The target group of these *reactive* policies is the actual returnees, with the aim of promoting the reintegration of this group into society after their return home. However, with policies that *promote* return the target group is the *potential* returnees, who are still living away. The purpose of the policy is to encourage them to return, increasing the benefits of return migration for returnees, which would include factors such as social, demographic, economic and financial capital (Kacnarczyk and Lesinska 2012, p. 29).

The approaches and theoretical models outlined above, namely, neoclassical economics model, NELM, structuralism approach and transnationalism approach, serve as a basis for the following analysis of the data relating to return models of Latvian migrants. We will identify these models where they appear and offer explanations for patterns emerging that do not fit these theoretical models.

### 12.3 Data and Methods

In order to understand the motivation and experiences of those returning to Latvia, as well as how this reality related to official return migration policy, policy documents were analysed and 18 in-depth interviews were conducted with Latvian returnees. They were drawn from within various groups of age and social status, who had left Latvia within a period from 1991 to 2011. The analysis of documents and in-depth interviews with returnees were supplemented by an analysis of the survey data of Latvian emigrants from *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey.

The main method of obtaining data in the research was in-depth partly structured interviews with returnees, who had returned to Latvia following a period spent in emigration. The average age of the returnees interviewed was 32.5 years: the youngest respondent was 25 years old with the oldest being 47 years old. There were 13 work migrants among the respondents (both highly qualified and averagely or less qualified), 4 students, who had travelled abroad to study, as well as one spouse of a national of another country. Of these respondents, 16 had emigrated to live in Europe (9 in Great Britain) and 2 went to the USA. The majority of interviews (15) were conducted in Latvian, but Russian was spoken in three. The average time spent abroad by returnees was 4.6 years. The longest emigration period among the respondents interviewed was 11 years, while the shortest was 2 years. All interviews were carried out from February to November 2014.

The document analysis is based on policy planning documents concerning returned migration from 2008 to 2015, with the focus on the *Return migration support action plan for 2013–2016* (The Cabinet of Ministers instruction no. 356 2013). The eight courses of practical action included in the *Return migration support plan* have also been discussed with returnees during the in-depth interviews.

The quantitative survey of Latvian emigrants is used to characterise the level of awareness of emigrants about the *Return migration support action plan for 2013–2016*. The quantitative survey of Latvian emigrants *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey was organized in a period from August to October 2014. A total of 14,048 Latvians living abroad and Latvian nationals from 118 countries participated in it. Weighted data representing Latvian nationals in emigration was used in the analysis. Data from the OECD, Eurostat, the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs of the Republic of Latvia and Central Statistical Office of Great Britain and multiple imputation have been applied in weighing procedure. For more details on the survey methodology and data set see Mierīņa in this volume.

## 12.4 Findings

### 12.4.1 *The Process of Return Migration Policy Making*

Return migration policymaking in Latvia dates back initially to 2008, when the Secretariat of the Special Assignments Minister for Social Integration Affairs prepared a draft report on the action required to promote the return to Latvia of Latvian residents who left in search of a job (ĪUMSILS 2008). It is stated in the highest-level national development planning documents (Saeima 2010, 2012) that for the purposes of return migration policy it is necessary to promote the return to Latvia of residents who have left, and to suspend new emigration flows. Due to the economic crisis and the structural reforms of the public authorities that followed it, the issue of the migration of the population lost its topicality – as did ways of dealing with its related problems. The intensity of emigration flows increased significantly in the years that followed. Policymakers gradually addressed these problems in 2011, when long-term forecasts of labour development were prepared based on demographic forecasts and analysis of data on migration flow. The development of the Return migration support plan in Latvia was initiated in 2012 on the initiative of the Ministry of Economics. The information report *On proposals for return migration support activities* (Ministry of Economics 2013) explains that insufficient labour supply is one of the main arguments for drafting a return policy that will promote the return of Latvian residents who have left, in order to reduce the need for immigration from other countries. Immigration is the other argument for a policy encouraging leavers to return. The document acknowledges that the mobility of foreign labour is unavoidable so therefore it is important for Latvia to control this flow, preferring instead those people who have previously lived in Latvia. Finally, one

separate aspect of return migration policy is the promotion of the contribution of the diaspora to the Latvian economy: not however in connection with money transfers to Latvia but instead the development of entrepreneurship and export. The contribution of the diaspora to overall Latvian growth in the context of return migration policy thereby becomes a factor encouraging return. The objective of the Return migration support plan is defined as 'to determine particular support activities for those Latvian nationals who are living abroad and their family members, who consider the opportunity or have decided to return and work in Latvia or wish to establish their own company and develop business bonds with Latvia' (The Cabinet of Ministers instruction no. 356 2013). The developers of the *Return migration support action plan* also positioned it publicly as a support policy and to enable practical help for people who have left Latvia and are either willing to return or have already decided to.

There are eight courses of practical action included in the Return migration support plan. Two of them can be defined as information support. The first is designed to ensure the provision of co-ordinated assistance with information on various issues related to a return. The second is to make bilateral information about the labour market available, involving both employers and employees. The Return migration support plan includes a separate scheme to promote employment that obliges public authorities to ensure those living abroad are able to use some means of virtual communication in the selection process of employees. Special attention is directed towards attracting highly qualified specialists, with the aim of encouraging young people who have studied at foreign universities to return to Latvia. Generating and developing economic partnerships with the diaspora is planned too, as well as supporting the civic activities of the diaspora and distributing information about opportunities for returning to Latvia. Measures to provide support so all family members of returnees can learn the Latvian language after arrival in Latvia are also factored into the plan, as well as developing and extending the support that already exists for schoolchildren to return and integrate into Latvian schools, as well as for their parents. Finally, the eighth course of action aims to extend the range of people who have returned to Latvia and are entitled to the status of *Repatriate*<sup>1</sup> as well as the financial assistance that goes with it.

From this analysis of Latvian policy documents, return migration policy can be said to address both *potential* returnees by stimulating their return, and *actual* returnees by helping them normalise their life in Latvia more successfully once they are back. The *Return migration support action plan* assigns great importance to the diaspora as well, thereby including people who most probably will not return to Latvia to live there permanently.

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<sup>1</sup>According to the Repatriation Law (Saeima 1995), a repatriate is a person who on his/her own volition makes a permanent move to the Republic of Latvia and if: (a) he/she is a citizen of Latvia (registered in the Population Register as a citizen of Latvia and who has received a Latvian citizen's passport); or (b) one of his/her parents or grandparents is a Latvian or a Liv and his/her Latvian or Livonian descent can be proved by documentation.

### 12.4.2 *Return Experience in the Context of Return Migration Policy*

The practical homecoming of returnees has been analysed alongside an assessment of support activities defined by the *Return migration support action plan*. The assessments of return policy and corresponding opinions about it, are based on the experience of returnees. Attention has been paid to those aspects of return that are directly connected to the experience of participants in the research, such as job searches, the integration of children at school, support for the learning of the Latvian language and housing issues.

Data from *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey indicate that 61% of those surveyed have not heard anything about the *Return migration support action plan*. Another 30% have heard of it but do not know exactly what it provides while just 9% were informed about the plan and its provisions.

The return intentions of Latvian emigrants were not related to their awareness of the Return migration support plan. Sixteen percent of all emigrants were planning to return within the next 5 years and only 7% of them were aware of the plan and know what it entails. Thirty percent of Latvian emigrants acknowledged that they did not intend to return to Latvia, with 12% of those emigrants being familiar with the *Return migration support action plan*.

It should be noted that those most familiar with the *Return migration support action plan* were emigrants aged 35–54 years. In this age group, 15% were aware of the plan and knew the kind of support measures available to them, while in the age group 15–24 years only 3% were.

During their in-depth interviews the majority of the return migrants acknowledged that they were very poorly informed about the *Return migration support action plan*. They recognised that they had heard something about it and vaguely read something about it, but could hardly remember where or any substantive aspects of the plan. When asked which kind of state support would be necessary and important to people either actually returning or planning to return, they mentioned the following aspects:

1. Support regarding employment, such as help finding work;
2. Raising the level of the minimum salary until it allows basic human needs to be met;
3. Provision of housing for the first 6 months of return;
4. Social assistance for provision of children's needs;
5. Support for pupils integrating back into the Latvian educational system.

Only some, not all, of these aspects have been included in the *Return migration support action plan*.

When interviewed about the process of return, the main focus for returnees was the theme of employment. Not so much, however, on support finding a job, but concentrating more on overall economic growth in Latvia as a pre-condition for

promoting return. Economic growth as a theme was covered via elements such as minimum salary, stability of work, job creation, the operation of major companies in Latvia and opportunities to develop one's own business. Essentially, people talked about the opportunity of ensuring their material welfare as a way of guaranteeing their return. One woman who returned from Ireland in 2011, Paula, now 30 years old, explains:

Job. Maybe we could start by stopping destroying all the big companies. [...] let them pay the minimum [salaries], but at least let those people who work here have that job. Let us keep what has remained here in Latvia. [...] From my minimum salary I could afford to maintain, for example, a car, an apartment, to travel to Latvia, to shop, to dress myself, to feed myself, to buy presents and to send them. I could do that from the minimum salary there. What is possible from the minimum salary here? Nothing. You cannot even pay [the rent] for the apartment. Therefore my point is: what can we dream about here? Why should people return? [...] There are many people who want to return if there was a job, but nobody is going to come working for minimum salary. No.

This excerpt illustrates an essential dimension of the way the target group views a return home. One can see that not only is practical support expected from the return migration policy, but this policy is also expected to promote that return, by fostering the overall – and mainly economic – development of the country.

The *Return migration support action plan* provides mainly information support for those looking for a job. The practical experience of returnees shows that models for finding work in Latvia vary a great deal and are determined by particular individual factors. Firstly, opportunities to find jobs in Latvia are determined by the requirements of the individual: the type of work, their remuneration and location. Secondly, education and experience are important factors. Several highly educated specialists have found they can be based in Latvia but work officially in some other country at the same time. Such opportunities are determined greatly by the specific skills of the particular professional. For example IT specialists or consultants in certain industries have more opportunities to work remotely, but these opportunities do not make themselves and a lot of effort can be required to live like that. Experience and contacts acquired abroad are especially important in this model and this is usually possible only for high-level professionals in certain industries.

The returnees interviewed for this research discussed their techniques for finding a job. One popular method was to contact previous employers at their place of work prior to emigration. Social contacts and acquaintances of friends and family played a significant role in looking for and finding a job, as the experience of 26 year old Alla suggests. She returned from the USA in 2014:

[I found a job] via acquaintances; via acquaintances of Mum. Not by myself, unfortunately. Such a job is difficult to find myself. It seems to me that in general many find jobs here through acquaintances in Latvia. If you don't know anyone then most probably you are not going to find anything.

Several returnees interviewed acknowledged that they did use various internet job sites to search for vacancies while in the host country, but the actual finding of



a job once home happened through social networks and previous work experience. The improvement of online job sites is one of the provisions of the *Return migration support action plan*, and while respondents assessed that support positively it was not so much for themselves but for other emigrants from Latvia, for whom they felt a unified source of information on work opportunities in Latvia would be useful.

One important area of support in the *Return migration support action plan* which stood out for returnees was help for children and their parents integrating back into Latvian schools. Returnees described the difficulties they encountered, such as complications when applying to register their children at schools in Latvia. The majority of returnees already knew their children were not going to get into kindergartens financed by municipalities because the children were not registered in time, but were indignant about facing problems getting their children into the first grade in schools in certain places. Emma, 30 years old, who returned from Great Britain in 2013, recalls:

It was difficult for us to get the children into school: that took me aback. How can it be? In the first grade! How many schools do we have [in the city]? They can be counted on the fingers of one hand, and they tell us that there are no places in any of them. No places? How can that be? Initially my sister went to find out. She went to all the schools and was told that you had to apply for children going into the first grade in February. [...] I called the director and they found a place. Because there are two [daughters], I understand, but it appeared incomprehensible to me that there are not [any places]. How can one say there are no places like that?

Secondly, parents particularly stressed the need for special support for learning the Latvian language. Drawing on their own experience, only a few children attended Latvian schools in the host country at weekends and had very little communication in Latvian with children the same age with regard to their social and psychological adaptation to a school in Latvia. When entering the first grade or later, the children of returnees initially have problems with the Latvian language, because preparation for school at kindergarten age has taken place in another language while abroad. Judging from their own experience, several returnees stressed that any plans to return should be in time for children to start school in the first grade, because re-integration in school later is much more difficult and more complicated for the child. Catherine, a 38 year old who returned from Ireland in 2011, said:

I think if parents are thinking about their children and wondering whether to return, then they should return so they can start learning from the first grade, because later it will be harder for them, when they are already eight or nine or ten, then they have to start learning here all over again in Latvian. It seems to me that is even more traumatic for a child.

When considering difficulties that children have encountered returning to Latvian schools, especially in the senior grades, returnees also mentioned differences between the educational programmes of the host country and Latvia and insufficient support for in-depth and individual studies of subjects, especially if those subjects were not included in the study programme of the host country.

The majority of returnees interviewed saw support for learning the Latvian language or improving knowledge of it in a positive light. Respondents separated their



needs regarding brushing up or improving their Latvian language skills from the help needed to teach Latvian to the families of returnees – that is, partners, spouses and children – whose native language is not Latvian. Language support for the families of returnees was assessed very positively, emphasising that language can be a hindrance for a family considering moving to Latvia.

The in-depth interviews with emigrants indicate that Latvian nationals who have families with host country nationals who are considered foreigners in the Latvian community are significantly less likely to consider returning or moving to live in Latvia. When speaking about themselves, most said they didn't need help with the language. One respondent said he was attending private Latvian lessons to improve his language skills after 7 years spent abroad. This experience may indicate that native language speakers who return will have varying needs. If respondents do not feel the need for such support (especially those who have spent a comparatively short time in emigration, such as up to 5 years), then it might be important both for Latvian children born abroad and for family members from other countries.

One form of support that is not included in the *Return migration support action plan* is finding housing in Latvia after returning. According to the results of the in-depth interviews this is a very important issue for the target group of the policy.

For some returnees it did not cause any problems because their return had been planned beforehand or the emigration had been planned for a definite term, so they kept somewhere to live in Latvia. Those who faced difficulties with housing had sold their properties in Latvia, or kept their homes in Latvia but found a job in another area; for example, living in a house in the countryside while their new job was in Riga.

Usually the solution was to rent an apartment but returnees point out that housing policy in Latvia is not friendly to 'incomers'. Municipalities do not offer apartments for rent as there are long queues for them, or they offer poor quality apartments where tenants must take responsibility for repairs in order to live there. There are also returnees who have purposely saved money to buy a house in Latvia when they come back. One example is 29 year old Una, who returned from Norway in 2013:

Unfortunately my husband's family house was sold, because his mother also moved to live abroad and sold that country house and farm. We did not have a place to return to. We lived for a while at my mum's and in a friend's house in the country. We searched for three months to find a house in Latvia, looking through the adverts and driving around through all the regions every week in order to decide which region we liked. We simply followed up every advertisement and went there one by one, watching, searching. In January we found this place where we are currently living and bought a small country farm with four hectares and a little house, and we moved straight away to our new farm.

If one can find a house, the moving process itself is not complicated. Many choose to bring back all their belongings from the host country. That can be done easily using the network of transport vans that has spread throughout Europe, especially if moving to Latvia from England or Ireland. Difficulties are mostly due to the lack of information about various administrative issues, and the returnees interviewed had mixed feelings about the information provided by the Return migration support plan. When considering what might be regarded as 'essential information'

for returnees, most wanted information relating to their re-integration into society, which can be broken down into the following areas:

1. An essential area is social protection. Social guarantees worry some returnees, especially those in average or low qualified work.
2. There was much uncertainty on tax issues, such as changes in tax rates, methods of payment, the rules on inheritance tax, returning overpaid tax, or ways to transfer from one country's tax system to another without being taxed twice? Returnees said they found their own answers to these questions by asking acquaintances who had experienced similar problems on their return, or they found people who could advise them.

Other areas causing concern for returnees were housing and getting children into the education system discussed earlier in this chapter.

Each re-integration process is different but many returnees observed that they felt like they hadn't left at all, because when they did return they felt like they had come back home to their own environment. Una, who returned from Norway, said:

We want to live in Latvia and finally we have found our place. Those six years we were away were full of never-ending questions for us about where we want to be, what we want to do. All the time there was a feeling that we were not in the right place: not in Norway, Spain, or Asia. It's only since we have found this house in Latvia – our house in the countryside – that we have a feeling we are finally where we are supposed to be, and that we can do what we like.

The opportunity to live in one's native country, speak in one's own native language and live in an environment one is accustomed to provides a feeling of freedom and self-confidence, but that has been heightened by the experience of life in other countries. However, for some returnees, re-integration did not take place so quickly. Paula, who is 30 and returned from Ireland in 2011 said she needed around 18 months to re-integrate:

Because you sit there, integrate and get accustomed to that system and how everything goes on there. It took me one and a half years before I got acclimatised here again. That's after five years away. If a person wants to return after ten years, after fifteen years, then I think that's terribly difficult. Very, very difficult.

When asked to assess the return migration support activities overall, research participants suggested that instead of promoting the return of people, efforts and resources should be put into keeping the existing human capital in Latvia, rather than allowing it to flow away to other countries.

A second factor mentioned was that an improvement in the economic situation and a rise in the overall welfare level of the country would have a bearing on the mass return of emigrants, coupled with tougher laws to crack down on bribery and corruption, and thus dispel the impression that results can be achieved through influence. There is also a sense that some policies are short-term solutions to particular and specific problems, like that of return migration. While this is presented as a significant policy, some returnees consider it under-funded, symbolic and not sufficiently developed to be effective.

Returnees interviewed were sceptical about whether the re-emigration policy would promote a process of return. For some, deciding whether to return to Latvia or stay in the host country was not determined by the support provided by the state, but by their own decision, reached independently. One example came from 30 year old Emma, who returned from Great Britain in 2013:

I didn't go home because of the plan. Let's be realistic. There's nothing so tempting that I would go home because of the plan. It all depends on people themselves. I went home with the aim of getting a job: I will live here and everything will be fine for me. [...] I think it's good to have the plan and it's an incentive for some people but my personal thoughts are that if a person wants to go home, they will go home without that plan. But the government has to do some work to deal with the problems that exist.

Respondents do not deny the need for a return migration support plan, because that demonstrates the state is at least prepared to help promote return migration. Thus – if nothing else – the return migration plan has a symbolic meaning. Nils, who is aged 27 and returned from Great Britain in 2011, said:

I have heard something about our government being interested in getting people abroad to return. To interest them in returning. That's what I've heard. [...] This issue has been discussed several times when I have been living in Latvia during the last few years. Considering the number of our residents, it's important for Latvia that people from abroad come back.

### ***12.4.3 Reasons for Returning to Latvia***

Homesickness is a characteristic common to returnees; one reason why they returned. It is one of the crucial aspects affecting a decision on return for both those who went to study abroad and gain new experience and those who emigrated because of the economic situation. Both groups of leavers emphasise a very strong wish 'to return home' or 'to their own environment' but – like Nils who returned from Great Britain – this feeling comes only when they have spent several years outside Latvia:

I decided to follow my inner feeling and intuition to return home. By following my intuition, under certain conditions I did not feel like staying in England anymore. I wanted to return to Latvia. In the same way I wanted to go to England, I wanted to return home.

The expression most often used by returnees in their interviews is 'to return home', but some, when describing it, speak about a place where a person can feel comfortable with themselves, in their own environment, where they can be themselves without any pretence or adaptation to others. Others stress the positive feeling of being in their native land and a sense of belonging, as well as that it is easier for them to live in Latvia, because, despite the economic difficulties and low wages, everything there is known and clear. Una, who came back from Norway, said:

I wanted that feeling of my native land, that feeling of belonging; that you know everything, where you have friends, where you have family. Because it is difficult to fit in there [in Norway] and get accustomed to life there. It is easier to live here and to communicate, to build your life here.

Homesickness often relates to longing for Latvian nature and weather conditions. Returnees especially mention the weather when they have lived for several years somewhere abroad, for example in Ireland or England. There, the respondents say, there are not four seasons as in Latvia, but only two – autumn and spring. There is no hot summer, when it is possible to swim in the sea, and there is no real winter either, with deep snow and temperatures well below freezing: in other words, the weather is not so extreme. One characteristic of the weather in Ireland or England that is mentioned often and which has left a lasting impression on returnees is rain. Catherine, 38 years old, who returned from Ireland in 2011, explains:

One reason I would not like to live there [in Ireland] for a long time or all my life is the weather. Awful, awful. When you go there for the first year, it's cool: minus one degree in winter is the lowest temperature. You can walk to work and back dressed in a jacket all year long. I enjoyed it for the first winter, when it was not cold, but then, when there is neither summer nor winter for years, but everlasting autumn and wind and rain... the sun rarely shines even on the best of days, then it gets so boring... It drives you into depression.

Returnees who lived in other countries, such as Switzerland or Norway, also missed Latvian nature. One of the female respondents acknowledged that nature in Switzerland is very beautiful but after she had lived there for a long time, she realised that it was a 'foreign beauty' and that Latvian nature was closer to her heart. Another participant, Una, who returned from Norway, complained about weather conditions there because her family wanted to grow food, but the conditions for gardening in Norway were very different to those in Latvia:

The first was the climate. We were not happy with the terrible cold and wet. We wanted to live in a country environment and grow everything ourselves, as much as possible, but nothing really came of that. Nothing grew there. It was too wet and there was no sun, and it was always cold for us ... such a lack of sun.

If homesickness and longing for Latvian nature are considered essential emotional background factors encouraging return, then family relations and a definite family situation are mainly the catalyst for, or a decisive factor in, making the decision to return to Latvia. These family situations can be very different. Firstly, a family has to be willing to be based in Latvia or a partner has to be willing to return. Secondly, many returnees evaluate their relationship with their parents while living abroad, and decide they would like to spend more time with them while they are alive. Their parents may be old or sick and need greater support. For many returnees, their decision to move back to Latvia was strongly influenced by a third factor: care for their children, especially in cases when children reaching their teenage years are not well adapted in the host country and are willing to return to Latvia. However, the decision to return in this scenario is most often connected either with the children starting school or with a baby being expected in the family and the parents wishing it to be born in Latvia. Martha, who is 34 years old and returned from Great Britain in 2010, said:

Firstly, I never liked living there. If the welfare was better here then many would return. At least, there is a big circle of friends of mine who would return. I returned because I did not want to live in London with a child at all. It simply seemed like a nightmare for me. [...] I

decided I had better put aside material values, and here is the countryside: we have the seaside five minutes' walk away, country life, friends, it is more free here. Yes, maybe those material values are not here, but on a domestic level, it seems to me that you can give more to your child.

Parents noticed their children assimilating into the local environment as soon as they went to the kindergarten or preparatory schools abroad. When living in England or Ireland, Latvian children switched to English when talking to each other because it was more convenient for them. There were parents who, aware of this assimilation of their children, took the decision that they wanted their children to be living in Latvia and to attend Latvian schools in order not to lose their Latvian-ness. One of them was 30 year old Emma who returned from Great Britain in 2013:

My girls turned English. They were four years old, and for little children the language changed very fast... , that is it; they do not know elementary words in Latvian any more. Even with us having a rule that we talk Latvian at home, when playing, they talked only in English. [...] They went to school, and everything went on in English for them.

Parents were aware that it would be more complicated to return once studies started outside Latvia. In the opinion of the parents, it would be significantly more difficult to integrate into a school in Latvia, especially because of the differences between the educational systems and study programmes at home and abroad.

Homesickness also operated on the level of language and the ability to speak in one's native tongue, where it's possible to express opinions and understand people better, for example, when health or medical issues have to be discussed, or in forming close social relationships. The language barrier and a lack of Latvians speaking the same tongue does not allow such bonds to be established. These concerns were expressed by Una, who returned from Norway in 2013:

We knew the language very well and we could communicate freely, but as soon as there was some more philosophical theme, the vocabulary was missing at once. However, in Latvia it is possible to establish very deep relationships with people exactly because of the language, because you can express yourself on complicated matters. The thing that was missing was that we could never express ourselves. You cannot make friendships with people [without that].

In their stories about experiences of emigration in Europe, returnees admit that if they did not have common life experiences and a deep knowledge of the national culture it was difficult to integrate within the society in European countries and make close friends there. Attitudes towards immigrants can be very positive and friendly, yet the main barrier is a lack of common experience and the unfamiliarity of local culture. This was encountered by 47 year old Charles, who returned from Norway in 2013:

They [Norwegians] are very open, very positive, open-minded. [...] Other matters cannot be overcome. They have another past, another language, another culture that you do not know. I do not know, do not understand, will never understand, who their Raimonds Pauls is [a popular Latvian composer] or what their *Limousine the Colour of Midsummer Night* [a popular Latvian movie] is. You watch and do not understand. It needs time. It needs decades.

On the one hand, for those Latvian emigrants who left in their childhood or as teenagers, it is easier to integrate because friendship circles are formed in youth. It is more difficult for an emigrant who has arrived in a country after the age of 30 to find friends because his colleagues have already established a circle of friends. On the other hand, young people are returning to Latvia who went abroad to study then realised their circle of friends was not forming as they would like. The cultural differences mean they struggle to enjoy their social life while abroad.

Two returnees, Una and Toms, are notable because they did not want to feel like foreigners all their life. They initially left Latvia planning to integrate fully in the host country. Una said:

Somehow the feeling emerged that we do not want to always be foreigners, because outside your native land you will never fit in. [...] We were always immigrants, although at the beginning we had planned to integrate and stay there all our lives.

Una and Toms are also notable because they decided to emigrate to escape the disorder in the social and political situation in Latvia at the time rather than for economic reasons. However, they were disappointed with their experiences living in Norway and realised that outside Latvia they would always be foreigners. A similar experience befell was 36 year old Zan, who returned from Switzerland in 2014. She admitted that although she was married to a Swiss man, she had encountered prejudices against Eastern Europeans. That was an important factor in taking the decision for the whole family to re-locate to Latvia:

When I started looking for a job, I realised that Switzerland is a rather nationalistic country. [...] If you do not talk in a fluent Swiss dialect, or are not with their own recognised universities... [...] So the choice was whether I started studying there, or I could work as a cleaner. [...] There are a terrible number of prejudices against 'Oslanders' – Eastern Europeans – and such a very critical attitude. People are very kind and polite, and kind of sincere, but so terribly narrow-minded and biased. [...] All those relationships are superficial. Also among friends. It was very difficult for me to integrate.

Several returnees who had studied in higher education worked in well-paid jobs abroad, but realised while living abroad that it was difficult for them to integrate in the host country in the social-economic sense, because, being immigrants, they were starting from a different position and were without accrued welfare and social contacts. The local specialists knew each other well and recommended each other, but immigrants from Latvia naturally had a significantly narrower circle of acquaintances. In many places a lack of knowledge of the national language can hold their careers back and also prevent them from reaching a certain level of welfare.

Our study shows that the expectations of returnees before emigration varied widely as to the planned duration of their emigration and its targets. There were respondents who had planned to go on a lasting and continuous emigration, building new lives in another country, becoming a long-term resident and integrating into its society. There were also those who did not have clear migration targets and who relied on hope: 'the life [there] will show us how much better it is, and opportunities will come up.' Another category of respondents linked migration with a very par-

ticular task, for example, earning enough to pay debts or to get away for the duration of the economic crisis in Latvia. For them, the logical decision was to return to Latvia when it was over.

In the cases of planned short-term or medium-term migration, it is a characteristic that the emigrant has relatives and property remaining in Latvia, for example, a house or apartment, which needs to be paid for. In these cases, being in the host country is connected only with a job and a purpose: how to earn more money and accrue some means. Part of the income earned is used for the rent or mortgage payments and for maintaining the family in Latvia. The daily expenses are kept as low as possible in order to save as much as possible, while at the same time close contact is maintained with relatives in Latvia. Trips to Latvia are made regularly or relatives are brought out to visit the host country.

Those emigrants who initially planned to stay in another country permanently but have now returned to Latvia fall into two different groups.

There are those who have realised that they over-estimated the potential benefits of emigration, and under-valued the advantages in Latvia. After being confronted with the host country's social, cultural and economic realities they have found that life conditions and opportunities in Latvia are better than in their host country. There was no need for them to emigrate looking for a better life and their illusions have collapsed. For this group the experience of emigration has been a reality check.

Then there are other returnees, who, on assessing their gains and losses, realise that returning to Latvia is a better option than staying in the host country, because the quality of life they can have in Latvia is similar to that in emigration, but they are at home. This involves a like-for-like calculation of quality of life against income. The income abroad may be higher, but so are the costs. Their argument might run: 'If we are no better off, is it worth living away from Latvia?'

Many returnees have travelled abroad with an open mind, with no definite plans about how long they might stay away or when to return. They admit the experience of migration has caused them to reassess their values repeatedly, leading to the realisation that, for them, non-material values are more important. Several respondents said the experience of migration has been positive and they got what they expected: money and experience. But the career opportunities abroad did not seem so tempting anymore, so they took the decision to return in order to live in Latvia, continuing to work and collaborate with partners they met abroad. They planned to keep receiving a salary, working there formally or rendering services in other countries, and also developing their business or services in Latvia. One example is that of Catherine, 38 years old, who returned from Ireland in 2011:

I felt that I can do a lot in England, that I can work in such a post, take on responsibility. [...] And you realise that you can. You believe in your powers. I don't think I would gain such experience in Latvia. I made money, I paid the loan, I spent money carefully. [...] I felt that I tried everything I wanted to. I got the experience I wanted. I could develop further in this career but it is not development for me. It is only making money, having responsibility; and it became uninteresting and boring for me.



#### 12.4.4 *Models of Return in the Stories of Latvian Returnees*

If the experiences of the returnees interviewed are broken down into several models of return identified in the theoretical literature (discussed earlier), the conclusion must be that the approach of the neoclassical economics model cannot be applied exactly to them. This is when a return takes place due to an unsuccessful migration experience, that is; no opportunity has been found to earn more and have a higher standard of living. Return in this instance is mainly connected directly to a set of non-economic factors. In many cases the experience of migration has brought the realisation that a bigger income in another country does not necessarily mean a higher quality of life. Thus a re-assessment of values takes place.

There are returnees who, having weighed up the pros and cons, material and non-material, decide that returning to Latvia is a better choice than staying abroad. It cannot be said definitely that an unsuccessful migration experience is not a factor for some returnees. A point to consider here is that people who have come back might not want to characterise their migration experience as a failure, and so find reasons to justify their decision. On the contrary, returnees are keener to look at their return as a story of success. In general it is: they have acquired knowledge, experience and self-confidence, learned English, Norwegian or German, paid their debts and saved up some money that can now be invested in a house in Latvia, and so on.

Examining the return process from the classification of the types of returnees identified by Cerase (1974), it should be noted that both 'conservative' and 'innovative' return can be found in the stories of returnees. One example of innovative return is developing business ideas in Latvia and investing savings into that business. Another is applying knowledge gained abroad to Latvian situations, such as returning to Latvia to work in the hotel business or as a lecturer at a university.

From the approach of structuralism, factors of context appear in several of the stories of returnees as having a significant impact on their decision to return. These may include, for example, returning due to an inability to integrate in the host country because of prejudices and stereotypes there, as well as changes in Latvia's situation, where the economic crisis eased a little between 2012 and 2014.

Several returnee stories indicate that people had planned to move abroad forever having lost the influence of the typical 'pull' factors – their relatives had emigrated as well and properties in Latvia had been sold. But they still returned to Latvia because the longer they lived abroad the more they realised they could not integrate fully into local society in the host country.

Therefore, out of the theoretical models of return identified within the research in the literature the model of the structuralism approach – 'a return due to an inability to integrate' – is definitely current in Latvia. However, the interviews that were conducted do not allow a judgement to be made on the other model of the structuralism approach – 'a return due to ageing' – that is, of pensioners coming back. This is because there are no returnees of retirement age among those interviewed. The average age of the returnees interviewed was 32.5 years old, with the youngest being 25 years old and the oldest 47 years old.



The current life models established by several of the respondents interviewed can be described as transnational, where – according to the transnationalism approach – a return to the country of origin does not mean the end of the migration cycle, and regular and close contacts are maintained across borders. In addition, professional operations are international or implemented in several countries. For example, one ‘returned’ interviewee went back again to Great Britain following a period of work in Latvia, in order to continue their studies at a higher level, while two other returnees have chosen a model of professional life that, while officially working mainly abroad, allows them to live most of the time in Latvia. Several returnees do not rule out the possibility of leaving Latvia again to live in another country for a period in order to improve themselves if they got a good job offer or opportunity. This is known as ‘open planning for the future.’ On the whole, the interviews with the returnees demonstrate that a transnational lifestyle can be established and maintained in Latvia encouraged significantly by the development of various electronic means of communication, cheap and available air connections and the establishment of transnational social networks.

## 12.5 Conclusions

An analysis of the development of Latvia’s return migration policy reveals that it emerged initially as an answer to a restrictive immigration policy and to challenges of demographic and employment policy that are connected to expected labour shortages in Latvia in the future. However, the *Return migration support action plan* itself is a set of particular support activities for those people who have already returned to Latvia or have taken the decision to return. Thereby the existing return migration policy consists mainly of support policies, not strategies for development. Its primary objective is not to stimulate the return process but to ensure practical assistance for the re-integration process in Latvia, mainly in labour markets and education. Opinions among the target group of the *Return migration support action plan* provided evidence that led to the conclusion that the plan was seen as a set of activities to facilitate the return of Latvian emigrants. Such an interpretation does not correspond with the objectives of the practical support provided and the aims defined by policymakers. At the same time, the perspective of the target group greatly influenced the critical assessments of the plan.

Those groups directly targeted in return migration policy – people who have returned or are considering returning – are not unequivocal in their assessment of the activities of the plan.

The results of the in-depth interviews lead to the conclusion that the *Return migration support action plan* has not had any importance in influencing decisions about returning. The majority of emigrants were poorly informed about these support activities and, when making decisions, relied on their own resources and opportunities, not the external support.

However, irrespective of this, the experiences of returnees showed that the activities included in the *Return migration support action plan* as a whole corresponded to the needs of the target group. This was especially the case in support for pupils re-integrating into the Latvian educational system, in the provision of access to information on various administrative issues connected with returning, and either learning the Latvian language or getting better at speaking it. One important form of support for the target group that had not been included in the *Return migration support action plan* was assistance with housing issues for the initial return period.

On the whole, the in-depth interviews with returnees showed that people who return to Latvia are diversified. There are differences in the length of time spent abroad, their host country, motivation, plans and expectations when leaving Latvia and their life experience and status while abroad.

The diversity of experience of the returnees allowed the analysis of very different reasons for return and the various dimensions of the return process. However, in this research there are also aspects uniting the returnees. Firstly, all the returnees have maintained Latvian citizenship, and that can be considered as a factor stimulating a return to Latvia. Secondly, most returnees maintained close bonds with Latvia – both emotional and economic – during their entire period of emigration. The majority of respondents had relatives still living in Latvia; many had or still have properties in Latvia and they maintained a strong social network in Latvia through close bonds with relatives and friends. One crucial factor influencing return was the duration of emigration, whether planned as short-term or longer-term. The longer people stayed abroad, the more difficult it was to return. These factors contributed to the decisions they made about returning, as well as facilitating their social and economic adaptation in Latvia after they came back.

An important conclusion that can be reached from the qualitative data gathered in the research is that the main reasons for returning are non-economic. If economic reasons dominate the reasons for leaving – alongside a wish to see the world or get an education – then coming back is connected with homesickness, a desire to spend more time with relatives in Latvia, a longing for Latvian nature, to speak Latvian and to live in the Latvian environment, while also eliminating the risk of non-assimilation for their children in the country they emigrated to. Some participants in this research reported difficulties of integration into the host country as an important reason for return. They did not feel accepted as their own by the local people and did not have close friends, neither was it possible to achieve the levels of income and social status that local people have. Perhaps migrants had solved the financial difficulties that caused them to emigrate originally.

Finally, if we look at the return stories of Latvian returnees from the perspective of the different theoretical models of migrant return based on studies in other countries, we can clearly identify three of them. There are cases of return as a calculated strategy when return is previously foreseen and planned. There are both types of stories among returnees – ‘conservative’ and ‘innovative’. In some cases, the resources gained are used for individual or family needs, for example, paying debts or earning the money for a new house. In other cases, return is innovative as new business is started or there is a career development. However, many stories of return

illustrate an inability to integrate into the host society because of status as a ‘migrant’ and the feeling of being a stranger in that particular society. In a few cases, we also observed the return of transnationals, who continued their professional activities at an international level. Preparation for return is made especially if a new business is being developed or a transnational carrier is maintained. However, in almost all cases, return is not spontaneous.

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# Chapter 13

## The Nexus Between Higher Education Funding and Return Migration Examined



Rita Kaša

### 13.1 Introduction

Internationally mobile students have become one of the most significant groups of new migrants (Murphy-Lejeune 2002). The number of students pursuing higher education studies outside their country of origin between 1990 and 2012 has tripled, reaching 4.5 million students in the world (OECD 2014, p. 342). Part of international student mobility is motivated by and has resulted in what Robertson (2013) calls ‘the education-migration nexus,’ where international student mobility is significantly linked to national skilled migration policies (p. 3). While research suggests that most international students return home after their studies abroad, many remain in the country of study or move on to work in another country, thus becoming part of an emigrant community (Bijwaard and Wang 2016; King and Ruiz-Gelices 2003; Sykes 2012; Vertovec 2002). Furthermore, in the context of circular migration, highly skilled international graduates – described in the literature as ‘global graduates’ (Brooks and Waters 2013) – become part of transnational social networks (Vertovec 2012), possibly leading to a ‘triple win’ outcome with benefits to receiving countries, sending countries and to the global graduates themselves (Castles and Ozkul 2014).

Governments engaging in funding internationally mobile students have various rationales. As one approach, receiving countries fund students from abroad as part of their foreign aid and public diplomacy programmes (Brooks and Waters 2013, p. 144). The outcome of soft diplomacy via the funding of international students who promote a positive image of the country can also be seen in the cases of sending countries (Del Sordi 2017). Another rationale for funding international student mobility is supplying the country’s labour market with highly skilled professionals. In the case of receiving countries, international students – in effect, graduates-to-be –

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are essentially encouraged to immigrate (Choudaha and de Wit 2014). For sending countries the goal is the opposite. They seek to ensure that their international students come home and become part of a productive society (Sagintayeva and Jumakulov 2015). Attaching conditions to the scholarships funding international student mobility is a way for governments to manage international student migration.

Campbell (2018) identifies three approaches that governments use to ensure that international students funded through scholarships return after graduation. The first approach involves a binding agreement signed in advance between a student and the government, obliging the graduate to return and using penalties as the incentives for compliance. The second approach is a social contract between a student and their government. It is made clear to the student they are expected to return after graduation and are incentivised by the prospect of opportunities for them at home when they do. The third approach involves vague post-graduation guidelines which do not explicitly compel the graduates to come back or offer incentives for return. However, this third approach occurs mostly where there is a specific context, e.g., a conflict or a humanitarian crisis in the home country of these international students.

Scholarships, however, are only one source of higher education funding for students abroad. Many international students use loans to pay for their studies. The focus of this study is specifically on international students who borrow from their home country's student loans programme to pay for their higher education abroad. Based on the examples of students from Latvia who took loans to pay for higher education in Great Britain and the Netherlands, this chapter considers whether student loan forgiveness prompts graduates to return from abroad. The chapter examines this question within the specific policy framework of student loans and governmental policy to stimulate return migration to Latvia (The Cabinet of Ministers instruction no. 356 2013), juxtaposing this policy with the perspectives of three graduates who took a student loan from Latvia to pay for their higher education in other countries. This chapter uses a sub-sample of *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey data to provide context for the way international students from Latvia pay for their education abroad and what their views are about returning to their homeland. The semi-structured qualitative interview and survey data presented in this chapter were collected in 2014 and 2015 as part of the research project *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia: National Identity, Transnational Relations and Diaspora Politics*.

This chapter continues with a review of the literature on concepts central to this study; a description of the student loans system in Latvia as it relates to international student mobility, a description of methodology, findings and a concluding discussion.

## 13.2 Conceptualising International Student Mobility and Higher Education Funding

### 13.2.1 *Defining International Student Mobility and Migration*

In a world where the movement of people is expanding constantly, the border between mobility and migration sometimes becomes blurred. International students live on the continuum of mobility and migration. The personal experiences of international students in the host country and the professional opportunities that may present themselves shape their thoughts about returning home, staying where they are, or perhaps moving onto new horizons in another country or continent. Data in *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* research has shown increasing numbers leaving Latvia to study, thus confirming that international student mobility offers a path for possible emigration (Kaša 2015a).

When defining the terms ‘mobility’ and ‘migration’ in relation to international students King et al. (2010) state that the term mobility implies a short stay away with a high probability of return. This is the case with students taking part in academic exchange programmes such as Erasmus. However, they say it is harder to decide how to categorise the movement of students who go abroad for full degree studies which take at least a year and more, so-called ‘degree mobility’ (Teichler 2017). This fits the typical statistical definition of international migration better, implying a move of at least 12 months. Yet the probability of return after graduation might be quite high and thus the term ‘migration’ would not be as accurate as the term ‘mobility’ in describing this student movement (King et al. 2010).

So when does international student mobility become migration? Research shows that the intention to immigrate to the country of studies can be present prior to a student going abroad; a phenomenon called ‘higher education-migration nexus’ (Gribble and Blackmore 2012; Robertson 2013; Sykes 2012). Equally, this intention can also be completely absent when starting the studies and forms upon graduation (Alberts and Hazen 2005). Students who initially did not intend to stay in the country where they studied may not actually leave due to jobs, marriage or other personal reasons. All in all, there is likely to be a set of push and pull factors associated with whether international students stay in the country where they studied after they graduate, or whether they go back home (Chankseliani 2016; Han et al. 2015; Kim et al. 2011).

While acknowledging that it is difficult to make a direct comparison of ‘stay rates’ of international students in different countries, Sykes (2012) estimates that on average 25% of international students in OECD countries stay on after graduating. This statistic suggests that most international students do not become what Robertson (2011) calls ‘student switchers’. Also scholars note that work in one country today no longer means a complete resettlement and life away from one’s



home country. In her study of European student mobility within the EU, Murphy-Lejeune (2002) points out that international students - and later global graduates - enjoy the benefits of 'mobility capital', which due to their international experiences and exposure enables them to move and succeed in various contexts (p. 51). The transnational ties of international students and global graduates also mean that for many the concept of 'home' may include more than one country (Levitt 2004; Robertson 2013).

### ***13.2.2 Public Funding as a Tool for Steering International Mobility of Students and Graduates***

'The funding of higher education is of central importance to debates about student mobility,' state Brooks and Waters (2013, p. 144). Indeed, the accessibility of higher education for students abroad depends on the availability of funding as well as whether the costs of higher education are affordable (Johnstone 2001). Students cannot access higher education if they cannot get funding to cover the costs of their education and student living. At the same time, even if such funding is available, the level of these costs is important for students and their families. Research shows that unaffordable costs of higher education overseas deter students from pursuing higher education internationally (Caruso and de Wit 2014), while optimal tuition encourages international enrolments (Lange 2013). Thus, governments can use public funding to steer international student mobility.

Funding for international student mobility can be placed in a theoretical model of higher education cost-sharing (Johnstone 2003). This model distinguishes between direct and indirect grants to students. Direct grants are funds made available to students in the form of scholarships, while an indirect grant is a subsidy enclosed in a student loan (Johnstone 2006). Migration or residency related conditions can be attached to both forms of this student financial assistance.

### ***13.2.3 Direct Grants to International Students***

Research by Perna et al. (2014) into direct grants to international students globally found that 59% of scholarship programmes designed specifically for international students with direct funding available required the student to return to their home country after graduation (p. 68). The remaining 41% of international scholarship programmes did not set return conditions for students.

While special scholarships are one way of accessing international higher education, another method is through 'opening up' national student financial aid programmes for funding higher education in another country (Lam et al. 2013, p. 12).



This ‘portability’ of student financial aid allows students to use their national programmes of student aid to cover higher education costs abroad. Most countries in Europe offer students the opportunity to fund higher education abroad from the general national student aid system (p. 38). However, it is not uncommon to have special conditions attached to this source of funding. For example, 11 European countries required prospective students to demonstrate continuous residence in the country prior to their grant application and the range of countries they could choose from to study in was limited (Lam et al. 2013). Interestingly though, this study did not identify return migration-related requirements in the context of portable state grants or governmentally-subsidised loans.

Scholarships or direct funding for international students that are offered by receiving countries display both approaches; that is, some require the graduate to go home after completing their studies, while others encourage them to stay.

Among prominent examples of the ‘return’ requirement are scholarships provided by the US government such as Fulbright or, in the context of the Baltic States, Baltic American Freedom Foundation scholarships. Although the recipients of these scholarships can engage in optional practical training and gain work experience in the US after graduation, a general feature of these scholarships is the home residency requirement for international students after graduation. They are usually required to return to their home country for at least 2 years. There are instances when this requirement can be waived, but this is subject to a separate application (US State Department *n.d.*). Including a return requirement in the conditions of direct higher education grants to international students is designed to make sure their mobility is circular rather than one-way.

Receiving countries granting scholarships to international students without return requirements offer the opportunity for them to stay after graduation (Choudaha and de Wit 2014, p. 24), enabling skilled migration among global graduates and one-way rather than circular mobility. In a comparative study of policies in five European countries – Germany, France, the Netherlands, the UK and Sweden – Sykes (2012) identified a series of policy measures aimed at retaining international students as immigrants. These measures include permission to work in the country after graduation, combining work and study during the period of education, recognising the years spent studying in the country in applications for permanent residency and naturalisation, streamlining the procedures for obtaining student visas and highly skilled work permits, and creating new visa categories for international students, simplifying some of the visa requirements. It should be noted here that immigration and work restrictions which apply to non-EU students who want to study in the European Union are not relevant for intra-European international students. EU citizens can study in any member state according to the same rules as the local nationals (European Commission 2011). International students of EU origin can work after their graduation in any other EU country.

### ***13.2.4 Indirect Grants to International Students***

Indirect grants as student loan subsidies are another source of national funding for students. The hypothesis linked to the education-migration nexus associated with this financial tool is to do with student debt forgiveness.

An indirect subsidy or an effective grant (Johnstone 2006) within the scope of the student loan programme may involve a subsidised interest rate, a government-funded period of grace on repayments, a government guarantee against default or cancellation of the debt altogether. The availability of these indirect subsidies to students may depend on their migration decisions.

There is limited evidence as to whether this approach influences return migration decisions among international students. One example from the United States concerns a policy implemented in the state of Alaska for US students from 1972 to 1987 (Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education 2014; McBeath and Morehouse 1994). Students who borrowed from the Alaska Student Loan Programme and graduated successfully could have half their overall debt cancelled if they stayed in Alaska for at least 5 years. An additional condition was that the borrowers did not default on their loan (Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education 2014).

Only 20% of those borrowing from the state's student loan programme met all three criteria for post-graduation debt reduction, according to the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education (2014); completing their degree, not defaulting on the loan and living in Alaska for 5 years afterwards. This loan reduction programme was discontinued at the end of 1980s due to the worsening economic situation (McBeath and Morehouse 1994).

The Alaska student loan cancellation programme is unique, not only because one condition covered post-graduate migration behaviour but also because it did not include any workforce-contingent requirements. Workforce-contingent student loan forgiveness programmes are common in the context of the United States (Hegji et al. 2014; Kirshstein et al. 2004). These programmes also exist in other countries like Canada (Employment and Social Development Canada 2014) and Latvia, as described in the next section of this chapter.

Research into student loan forgiveness programmes usually focuses on the effectiveness of meeting society's needs for a workforce. Studies concerning the migration of international students and global graduates in turn focus on the issue of their motivation to return or emigrate (Lee and Kim 2010). The contribution of this article is in its focus on the link between student financial aid and the subsequent migration decisions of international students and global graduates.

### 13.3 Governmental Loans and Debt Forgiveness to International Students from Latvia

Latvia does not have a national scholarship supporting international student degree mobility (Teichler 2017). Instead, the Latvian government uses the subsidised loans programme to support the accessibility of higher education abroad for students from Latvia. It is the same programme which ensures access to higher education for students studying in Latvia (Kasa 2008). To facilitate the affordability of higher education, the government subsidises a loan's interest rate and repayment grace period, acts as the secondary and in some cases primary loan guarantor and also decides whether a student debt should be cancelled. Despite its primarily national focus, since its inception in 2001 the programme has widened to support international student mobility (The Cabinet of Ministers regulations no. 220 2001).

In 2000, there were 3005 students from Latvia at universities abroad. In 2012, this figure doubled to 6387 then decreased to 5737 students in 2016 (UNESCO 2018). In order to ensure sufficient funds for loans for students in higher education in Latvia, the government has set an annual cap on the amount of funding that can be allocated to students going abroad. Until 2014, that was 2% of the government's annual student loans budget. In 2014, due to the increased demand, the government doubled the funding to 4% of the annual amount (The Cabinet of Ministers regulations no. 230 2014). It also stipulated the maximum loan – 21,334 euros – that a student can receive for covering the costs of one degree abroad. If a student wants to acquire more than one degree abroad, the maximum loan is set at 28,458 euros in total. From 2002 to 2015, there were 1019 students who paid for their tuition abroad using the Latvian government's student loan, and 947 who used this loan to cover their living costs (Author's calculations based on data in public reports by the Administration of Studies and Research from 2002 to 2015).

Students who go abroad funded through the government's student loans programme are subject to the same rules of repayment and debt forgiveness as students in Latvia. There are no special conditions for students who borrowed to study abroad. The loans do not include conditions for international students to return home after their studies.

This did not change when the government was looking for ways to encourage return migration among Latvians abroad. What changed in 2013 was the policy rhetoric related to student debt forgiveness (Kaša 2015b). For the first time, in the policy document *Return migration support action plan for 2013–2016* the government identified those studying abroad as a special policy target group. It stated that students studying abroad could have their debts cancelled if they returned to government-approved jobs in Latvia that qualified for this measure (The Cabinet of Ministers instruction no. 356 2013). As this statement was included in the government's plan to stimulate return migration to Latvia, there was an assumption that this policy can influence the decision-making of international graduates. At the

same time, this statement did not make any alterations to the policy already in place. That is, any graduate with a loan from this programme – whether they had studied abroad or in Latvia – who was working in an eligible job could have their student debt cancelled.

Given the policy context, the question remains as to whether Latvian international students see the cancellation of their loan debt as a pull factor when considering whether to return home. This research aims to address this question through the perspective of international graduates who have borrowed from the government's student loans programme to pay for their higher education abroad.

### 13.4 Methodology

The evidence on the nexus between higher education student subsidies and the return migration decisions of international students and global graduates from Latvia presented in this article comes from a survey and qualitative interviews conducted as part of the research project *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia*.

Using a subsample of 1013 respondents who at the time of the survey were enrolled in higher education abroad, this chapter describes the sources of funding that international students from Latvia use to pay for their education abroad. (For details of the survey methodology see Mieriņa in this volume.) A cross-tabulation method was used to identify the return intentions of international students from Latvia against the source of their higher education funding.

While the survey data provides general information about how the funding of higher education abroad intersects with the perspectives of international students on returning home after graduation, the qualitative semi-structured interview data in this study reveals very personal opinions on the opportunities for student loan debt forgiveness and their decision to stay abroad or not. This chapter presents the stories of three global graduates who used the Latvian government's student loan to pay for their education in Great Britain and the Netherlands. Through their perspectives this chapter discusses the feasibility of the policy assumption that student debt forgiveness will encourage Latvians educated internationally to return home.

The interview participants were recruited applying a snowballing approach, purposely seeking to recruit international students and recent global graduates from Latvia (Cohen et al. 2011). In total, 21 participants matching this profile were interviewed, yet only three of them had used student loans from the Latvian government to pay for their studies abroad. Thus, this chapter includes only their perspectives. Identifying and recruiting the interview participants in this study took place separately from their participation in *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey. Their names have been changed to protect their identity.

## 13.5 Findings

### 13.5.1 *Higher Education Funding Among Students from Latvia Abroad and Their Intentions to Return*

International student mobility is determined by the ability of students to cover the higher costs of education abroad, which always includes student living and often tuition costs. In the case of international students from Latvia, survey data showed that 18% have to cover their living costs only since they pursue a higher education degree abroad for free, i.e., without tuition costs being charged. The other most frequently mentioned source of funding for students from Latvia to cover the costs associated with higher education were their own savings and income during the period of study (29%). The next was financial support from the family (15%). Almost one in ten respondents (9%) had received a scholarship from their host university, while 7% of all students abroad were covering their education costs with a scholarship from a foreign government. Six percent of students relied on foreign philanthropic funding. Less than 1% of students mentioned philanthropic funding from Latvia as a means to pay for higher education abroad.

The responses also showed the use of loans to pay the cost of higher education abroad. Having a loan from the host country's government was mentioned by 9% of students; 3% of students had taken out a loan from a bank abroad to pay for their higher education and 2% of respondents had government student loans from Latvia. Less than 1% of students had used a loan from a commercial bank in Latvia to fund their foreign degree.

This data shows that access to higher education abroad for students from Latvia is mostly funded by foreign sources, the student's own savings and income and their family. Only a few students rely on loans from the Latvian government to meet the costs of their education abroad. There are no Latvian government scholarships for Latvian students abroad.

The return intentions of students from Latvia at universities abroad, broken down by their source of funding, showed that most did not see themselves coming home in the near future. Interestingly however, the largest share of students who were confident or fairly confident about returning to Latvia – 33% – were those who had taken a loan from the Latvian government to pay for the cost of their education (see Table 13.1). The next highest share of students certain or nearly certain to return – 26% – were those whose families were covering their expenses.

The respondents least likely to return to Latvia in the near future were those who covered their education costs abroad from a foreign source of funding, such as a scholarship or a loan. Two-thirds of these respondents were sure or almost sure they would stay abroad.

Regardless of the source of funding for their higher education the tendency to stay abroad rather than return dominated among Latvian international students. However, one sample z-test for estimating the proportion of the population showed that the share of students funded by their family or with a loan from the Latvian

**Table 13.1** The return intentions of international students from Latvia categorised by the source of funding for their education abroad

Source of funding	I am certain or fairly certain I will return		I may return in certain circumstances		I am certain or almost certain that I will not return		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Personal income and savings from income	50	12	144	34	224	54	418	100
Financial support of parents or relatives	54	26	81	39	72	35	207	100
Loan from the government's student loan programme in Latvia	9	33	8	29	11	39	28	100
Scholarship from a foreign source of funding (governmental or private)	75	13	122	21	392	67	589	100
Student loan from a foreign source of funding (governmental or private)	22	12	49	27	109	61	180	100

Source: The author, based on *The Emigrant Communities of Latvia* survey

government who were intending to come back was statistically significantly higher than those students funded by a foreign scholarship ( $p < .05$ ), a foreign student loan ( $p < .05$ ), or their personal income and savings ( $p < .05$ ).

This suggests that international students funded by a source from their home country – in this case Latvia – have a stronger inclination to return than those students funded by foreign sources.

### 13.5.2 *The Nexus Between Loan Forgiveness and Return to Latvia*

This section discusses the policy hypothesis that loan forgiveness prompts students to come back after graduating from a university abroad. The issue is considered through the perspectives of three 'global graduates' (Brooks and Waters 2013) from Latvia – Laila, Modris, and Renate, who graduated from universities in Great Britain and the Netherlands and paid for their higher education abroad using the Latvian government's student loan. At the time of the interviews, Modris and Renate had returned to Latvia. Laila was still abroad.

For Renate, who earned a Master's degree and a PhD in social sciences at an internationally prestigious university in Great Britain, the opportunity to return to Latvia emerged in 2010 as she was finishing work on her doctoral thesis. This opportunity was an engaging and well-compensated academic research project in her field in Latvia run by a large public university. When the research project fin-

ished, Renate continued to work as a lecturer there. Having become a salaried lecturer and still owing 25,000 euros to the government's student loans programme, Renate was happy to have her student debts cancelled:

The student loan cancellation programme is an essential condition for me staying and working [at the university]. My current wage is enough for one as I do not have dependents and can afford more [financial] instability. I can also afford higher risks because I have a well-established social network and a well-to-do family. If I had dependents, I would struggle, but if I could see the job situation [in employment conditions] was not going to improve, I would not stay working here [in Latvia] but I would look for another job, possibly abroad.

As Renate's story shows, debt forgiveness was not a reason for her to return, but it was the reason she was able to work in a modestly paid public sector job. Thus, the student loan forgiveness worked as a retention policy for an international graduate, rather than as an incentive to return.

Modris took a student loan from the government to study in the UK but he too came home. By the time he graduated with a Bachelor's degree in social sciences, Modris owed £9000 [pounds sterling] in student loans in Great Britain and 22,000 euros to the Latvian government's student loan programme. After graduating, Modris spent 2 years working in a large international business consultancy in London before returning to Latvia in 2014, to work in a key position in a new innovative company. His motivation was homesickness: he 'missed Latvia' and did not want to spend all his life in Great Britain. While still in London he began asking about job opportunities in Latvia and was offered a leadership role at a start-up company which he considered a good opportunity, so he returned.

Modris was asked if the possibility of having his student debt cancelled if he returned was a factor in his decision:

No. When I worked in London, I had even forgotten that the government could cancel the debt if I worked in a certain profession. Therefore I think it's very important to maintain regular communication between the Administration of Studies and Research [which administers the loans in Latvia] and the borrower. I was away for five years and it would have been logical if once every half a year I received an e-mail saying 'Hi, how are you? Do you remember there are programmes which give you the opportunity to cancel part of your loan?'

Since Modris now works in the private sector in Latvia, he is not eligible for any help with his student loan payments. He argues that the government should take a more strategic approach to identifying areas of the economy where graduates who return to work in Latvia can qualify to have some of their debts written off: '[The government] should think in a smarter and broader way about which professions will benefit Latvia [as a country]. I think the entrepreneurial sector should be included in that.'

Laila, the third participant in this study, acquired her Master's degree in the Netherlands, funded by a government student loan. She is now an entrepreneur. While Renate and Modris went to Britain specifically to study – in 2003 and 2009 respectively – Laila moved to the Netherlands in 2009 to work in the same year that she graduated from university in Latvia. This was the time of the Great Recession in Latvia when many were forced to go abroad seeking work (Hazans 2016;



McGuinness 2010). Before leaving for Amsterdam Laila was employed but was not satisfied with her job. With high unemployment and few opportunities in Latvia she applied for jobs abroad and was hired by a large production company in the Netherlands. She moved to the Netherlands and supported her parents and younger siblings at home throughout the financial crisis.

In 2010, Laila began a Master's degree in communication and marketing in the Netherlands. She explains her reasons:

I understood that if I wanted to stay here and build a career, I would need a paper [higher education diploma] which shows I have graduated from a school recognised [abroad]. ... I started putting my thoughts together about my financial options for how I could afford to study [in higher education abroad]. I realised that my only option was the Netherlands ... because they support students very well financially.

Laila's studies were intensive and it was impossible for her to combine education with work. To cover the costs of her Master's degree, Laila had to take student loans. To cover the tuition fees she borrowed 1800 euros from the Latvian government's student loans programme. To cover her expenses while studying she borrowed an additional 15,000 euros from the student loan programme in the Netherlands.

Having completed her studies in 2012, Laila moved back to Latvia. She thought this was a permanent move but it lasted less than a month. One of her former employers in the Netherlands called her and offered her an opportunity that was so good she 'packed her bags in two minutes' and got on a plane for Amsterdam. The jobs she had applied for during the few weeks she was in Latvia were slow to respond.

Laila is now an entrepreneur in Holland. She set up two small companies, one in the Netherlands and one in Latvia, and runs these businesses, visiting Riga at least twice a year. Asked about the prospects of her returning to Latvia permanently, Laila said:

This thought crosses my mind from time to time. However, during this past year while working with business clients from Latvia I have realised that I am not sure if I want to go home [to Latvia]. ... If I could have two homes, then I would go to Latvia because of our great food, people, nature and things like this. I would keep the professional [life] here [in the Netherlands] and juggle both things. However, the reality is that because I have built my professional [life] here – and because business with clients in Latvia goes up and down – it is most likely that I will settle down here [in the Netherlands].

The possibility of having her student loan cancelled is not a factor significant enough to influence Laila's decisions about where she lives. Her student debts are not big enough to feel like a 'millstone round her neck.' She says if the Latvian government rang her up and said: 'We will pay your student loan – just come back to Latvia', she would refuse.



## 13.6 Conclusions

In 2013, amid heightened public concern about excessive emigration, the government of Latvia adopted a plan to motivate the return migration of those who had left the country (The Cabinet of Ministers instruction no. 356 2013). Among other things, this plan proposed cancelling the debts of students who borrowed from the government's loan programme to study abroad. The aim was to incentivise return migration among highly-educated Latvian emigrants. The purpose of this chapter was to examine this policy hypothesis through the perspectives of the target group: Latvians who went abroad to study and paid for their studies with Latvian government's student loans. This chapter also provided information about how international students from Latvia pay for their higher education abroad in general, and how the source of funding intersects with their intentions to return.

Data presented in this article shows that governmental student loan forgiveness in the present policy framework does not incentivise Latvian students abroad to come home. The government grants loans for studies abroad to fulfil the goal of access to higher education. These loans are not linked to more specific policy rationales about targeted human capital building. They do not carry any obligations for recipients to return home after completing their studies abroad. Thus, although funded by a loan from their own government, whether Latvian students at universities abroad return home after graduation is an expression of their free will.

While data in this research suggests that student loan forgiveness is not an incentive for international students to return to Latvia, it can be a retention mechanism if they return and then work in moderately-paid public sector jobs in Latvia. Student debt forgiveness supplements the income of international graduates in these positions by saving them money which otherwise they would need to pay back their student loan. If their salary is low and their loan repayments high, they might not be able to remain in the public sector job. Thus, student debt cancellation provides financial support to an international graduate in employment. It works to 'keep the talent that has returned' rather than as a trigger for return migration among Latvian students abroad.

At the same time, the sustainability of the impact of cancelling student debts as a way of retaining international graduates can be questioned. Data in this study reveals that writing off student loans does not eliminate the financial instability associated with low-paid public sector jobs. Thus, the risk remains of graduates educated abroad emigrating again for better-paid jobs elsewhere.

The potential of the debt forgiveness programme to impact on return migration is also limited because of its focus on public sector jobs. Understandably, the government wants to re-invest public money in the public sector in the form of highly-educated graduates whose education has been subsidised. But at the same time, this rationale excludes those graduates who want to work in the private sector.

Data in this study shows many international students from Latvia do not see themselves returning to Latvia after graduation, no matter what the source of funding. Thus international students from Latvia have high emigration potential. Interestingly, the intentions to return are more common among students who have paid for their studies abroad either with money from their family or with a student loan from the Latvian government. The most confident about not returning to Latvia are students whose higher education abroad was funded by foreign scholarships or loans. Why there is this difference might be a topic for future research. The findings from this research suggest that ‘the education-migration nexus’ (Robertson 2013) exists in any scheme of international student mobility funding.

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